This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

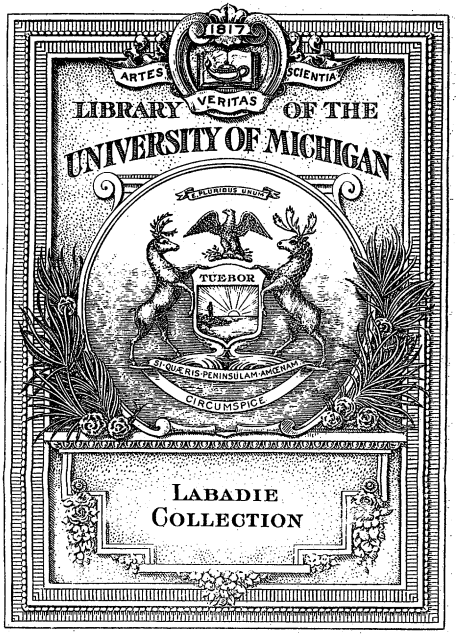
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

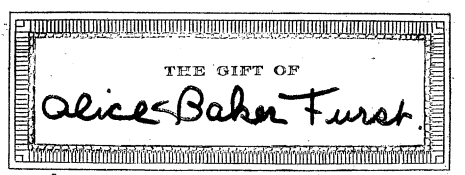
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`





June 1934

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google

MODERN SKEPTICISM:

A

JOURNEY THROUGH THE LAND OF DOUBT AND BACK AGAIN.

A LIFE STORY

BY

JOSEPH BARKER.

PHILADELPHIA:
SMITH, ENGLISH & CO.
1874.

Hosted by Google

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1874, by

REV. JOSEPH BARKER,

In the office of the Librarian of Congress at Washington.

Jas. B. Rodgers Co.,
Printers and Stereotypers,
Philadelphia.

Hosted by Google

CONTENTS.

PREFACE,..... 7

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.—My early life.—Enter the Church.—The Ministry.—Happy days.—Sad change.—How happened it?..... 17

CHAPTER II.

Causes of unbelief.—Vice.—Other causes.—Constitutional tendencies to doubt.—Disappointed expectations about Christianity.—Mysteries of Providence.—Misrepresentations of Christ and Christianity in human creeds.—Church divisions.—Ignorant advocates of Christianity.—Wrong principles of reasoning.—False science,..... 19

CHAPTER III.

Another cause of unbelief.—Bad feeling between ministers or among church members.—Alienates them from each other.—Then separates them from the Church.—Then from Christ.—How it works.—My case..... 26

CHAPTER IV.

Origin of the unhappy feeling between me and some of my brother ministers.—Tendencies of my mind.—Rationalizing tendency.—Its effects.—Reading.—Investigations.—Discoveries,..... 30

CHAPTER V.

Modification of my early creed.—Unscriptural doctrines relinquished.—Scriptural ones adopted.—Some doctrines modified.—Theological fictions dropped.—Eager for the pure, simple truth as taught by Jesus.—Doctrine of types given up.—Other notions relinquished.—Alarm of some of my brethren at these changes,..... 44

CHAPTER VI.

How preachers and theologians indulge their fancies on religion.—John Wesley.—His resolution to be a man of one book.—What came of his resolution.—His sermon on God's approbation of His works,—unscriptural and unphilosophical throughout.—Illustrations and proofs.—And Wesley was one of the best and wisest, one of the most honest and single-minded of our theologians.—What then may we expect of others?—Evils of theological trifling.—Mischievous effects of mixing human fictions with Divine revelations,..... 55

CHAPTER VII.

Further theological investigations.—Unwarranted statements by preachers.—John Foster's Essay on Some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion is Rendered Distasteful to Persons of Cultivated Minds.—Introduction of similar views to the notice of my ministerial brethren.—The reception they met with.—No Church has got all the truth.—Most Churches, perhaps all, have got portions of it, which others have not.—My attempts to gather up the fragments from all.—Freedom from bigotry.—Love to all Christians.—Judging trees by their fruit.—Reading the books of various denominations, like foreign travel, liberalizes the mind.—I found truth and goodness in all de-

Hosted by Google

nominations.—Appropriated all as part of my patrimony.—Results.—Suspicions and fears among my brethren.—Mutterings: Backbitings: Controversy. Bad feeling,..... 65

CHAPTER VIII.

My style of preaching.—Decidedly practical.—Using Christianity as a means for making bad people into good ones, and good ones always better.—Reasons for this method.—A family trait.—Hereditary.—Great need of practical preaching.—Folly of other kinds of Preaching.—Littleness of great Preachers.—Worthlessness of great sermons.—The Truly Great are the Greatly Good and Greatly Useful.—My Models.—The Bible.—Jesus.—My Favorite Preachers.—Billy Dawson, David Stoner, James Parsons.—My Favorite Books.—The Bible.—Nature.—Simple Common Sense, instructive, earnest, moving books.—How my preaching was received by the people.—Its effects on churches and congregations.—Uneasiness of my colleagues.—Fresh mutterings; tale bearings; controversies; and more bad feeling,..... 82

CHAPTER IX.

Extracts from my Diary.—A strange preacher.—Horrible sermons.—Lights of the world that give no light.—Theological mist and smoke.—Narrow-mindedness.—Intolerance.—T. Allin,—Great preaching great folly.—A. Scott,—A good preacher.—Sanctification.—Keep to Scripture.—R. Watson: theological madness.—Big Books on the way of salvation; puzzling folks.—Antinomian utterances about Christ's work and man's salvation.—Preachers taking the devil's side; and doing his work.—Scarcity of common sense in priesthoods, and of uncommon sense.—The great abundance of nonsense and bad sense.—Common religious expressions that are false.—Favorite Hymns that are not Scriptural.—Baxter's good sense,..... 98

CHAPTER X.

Reforming tendencies.—Corruptions in the Church.—Bad trades.—Faults in the ministry.—Toleration of vice.—Drinking habits.—Intemperance.—The Connexion.—Faulty rules.—Bad customs.—Defective institutions.—All encouraged to suggest reforms and punished for doing so.—Original principles of the Connexion set aside, and persecution substituted for freedom.—My simplicity.—My reward.—The Ministry.—Drunkenness.—Teetotalism.—Advocacy of Temperance.—Outcry of preachers.—My Evangelical Reformer.—Articles on the prevailing vices of the Church: On Toleration and Human Creeds;—On Channing's Works; On Anti-Christian trading, &c., get me into trouble.—Conference interference.—Conference trials.—The state of things critical.—No remedy.—Matters get worse and worse.—Exciting events: too many to be named here.—Envy, jealousy, rage, strife, confusion, and many evil works.—Conspiracies: Fierce conflicts.—Expulsion,..... 117

CHAPTER XI.

Explanations about the different Methodist Bodies.—Grounds of my reformatory proceedings.—About immoralities.—Christianity not to blame for the faults of professors and preachers.—My own defects,..... 153

CHAPTER XII.

Story of my life continued.—Results of my expulsion.—Fierce fighting.—Desperation of my persecutors.—Great excitement on my part.—Rank crop of slanders.—Monstrous ones.—And silly ones.—Bad deeds as well as wicked words.—Hard work.—Exhaustion.—Powerlessness.—Three days' rest.—Long sleep.—Wonderful,—delightful,—result.—Public debates.—Remarkable occur-

Hosted by Google

rences; seemed Providential.—A lying opponent unexpectedly confronted and confounded.—New Body,—Christian Brethren.—My church at Newcastle.—Change in my views, and fresh troubles.—Losses.—Poverty.—Learn the Printing business.—Follow it under difficulties.—Want of funds.—Generous friends. Family on the verge of want.—Pray.—An unlooked-for cart-load of provisions.—Trust in Providence.—False friends.—True ones.—A mad utterance.—A worse deed.—Theological Conventions.—Free investigations and public discussions.—Change of views,..... 163

CHAPTER XIII.

Approach to Unitarianism.—Kindness of Unitarians.—Preaching and lecturing in their pulpits.—Ten nights' public discussion with Rev. W. Cooke.—Subjects.—Results.—Publications.—New periodicals.—Unitarian invitation to London.—Public reception.—Liberal contributions to Steam Press Fund.—Press presentation.—Dr. Bateman; Dr.-Sir-John Bowring.—Pleasurable change from intolerance and persecution to friendship and favor.—Discoveries.—Unitarianism has many phases.—Channingism.—Anti-supernaturalism.—Deism.—Atheism.—Gradually slid down to the lower,..... 191

CHAPTER XIV.

The Bible.—My earliest views of its origin and authority.—Changed as I grew up.—Further changes.—Important facts about the Bible.—False theories of its Divine inspiration.—The true—the Bible's own,—doctrine on the subject.—Needful to keep inside of this.—No defence outside either for the Bible or for Bible men.—Explanations: illustrations: testimonies of celebrated writers.—The PERFECTION of the Bible—in what does it consist.—Foolish and impossible notions of perfection.—No absolute perfection in any thing.—No need for it.—Foolish talk about infallibility.—Other important testimonies,..... 202

CHAPTER XV.

Enters politics.—Advocates extreme political views.—Republicanism.—Foretells the French Revolution of 1848.—Great political excitement in England.—Government alarmed.—Get arrested.—Lodged in prison.—Trial.—Triumph over Government.—Great rejoicings.—Elected member of Parliament for Bolton, and Town Councillor for Leeds.—Exhaustion from excess of labor.—Health fails.—Terrible Pains.—Voyage to America and back.—Removes to America.—Objects in doing so.—Settles on a farm.—Gets into fresh excitement.—The Abolitionists.—Women's Rights.—All kinds of wild revolutionary theories.—Go farther into unbelief instead of getting back to Christ.—A mad world, with strange unwritten histories, and awful, nameless mysteries,..... 241

CHAPTER XVI.

Story of my descent from the faith of my childhood, to doubt and unbelief.—Bad theological teaching in my early days.—Dreadful results.—Perplexity.—Madness.—Survive all, and get over it.—The first arguments I heard for the Bible.—True basis of religious belief.—Reading on the evidences.—Effects.—Unsound arguments.—*Their* effect.—*Internal* evidences best.—Negative criticism, long continued, ruinous both to faith and virtue.—Moving ever downwards.—The devil as a theologian, a poet and a philosopher.—Bible Conventions.—W. L. Garrison, A. J. Davis.—Public discussions in Philadelphia with Dr. McCalla.—The Doctor's disgraceful failure.—Great,—mad,—excitement.—Narrow escape from murder.—Eight nights' debate with Dr. Berg.—The good cause suffered through bad management.—The Doctor took an untenable position.—Undertook to prove too much and failed.—Substantially right, but logically wrong.—Other debates in Ohio, Indiana, England and Scotland.—Mean and mischievous opponents.—Honorable and useful ones.—Bad advocates of a good cause, its worst enemies,..... 269

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER XVII.

Continuation of my Story.—Lectures on the Bible in Ohio.—Trouble.—Riot.—Rotten eggs.—Midnight mischief.—Had to move.—Settlement among Liberals, Comeouters.—*Too* fond of liberty.—Would have my share as well as their own.—Fresh trouble.—Another forced move.—Settlement in the wilds of Nebraska, among Indians, wolves, and rattlesnakes.—Experience there.—A change for the better.—How brought about.—Quiet of mind.—Reflection.—Horrors of Atheism.—Destroys the value of life.—Deceives you; mocks you; makes you intolerably miserable.—Suggests suicide.—Prosperity not good for much without religion: adversity, sickness, pain, loss, bereavement intolerable.—Strange adventures in the wilderness; terrible dangers; wonderful deliverances.—Solemn thoughts and feelings in the boundless desert.—Solitude and silence preach.—Religious feelings revive.—Recourse to old religious books.—Demoralizing tendency of unbelief.—Lecture in Philadelphia.—Cases of infidel depravity.—You can't make people good, nor even decent, without religion.—Infidelity means utter debasement.—A good, a loving, and a faithful wife, who never ceases to pray.—Return to England.—Experience there.—Unbounded licentiousness of Secularism.—Total separation from the infidel party.—My new Periodical.—Resolution to re-read the Bible, to do justice to Christianity, &c.—A sight of Jesus.—Happy results.—Change both of head and heart.—Happy transformation of character.—A new life.—New work.—New lot.—From darkness to light,—From death to life,—from purgatory to paradise,—from hell to heaven,..... 310

CHAPTER XVIII.

Parties whose Christian sympathy, and wise words, and generous deeds, helped me back to Christ,..... 345

CHAPTER XIX.

The steps by which I gradually returned to Christ.—Lectures and sermons on the road.—Answers to objections against the Bible and Christianity.—Spiritualism.—Strange phenomena.—Answers to objections advanced by myself in the Berg debate.—The position to be taken by advocates of the Bible and Christianity.—Additional remarks on Divine inspiration.—What it implies, and what it does not imply.—Overdoing is undoing.—Genesis and Geology.—The Bible and Science.—Public discussions,—explanation.—At Home in the Church.—Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing.—Joy unspeakable,..... 355

CHAPTER XX.

Lessons I have learned.—1. Men slow to learn wisdom by the experience of others.—2. Danger of bad feeling.—3. Of a controversial spirit.—4. Old ministers should deal tenderly with their younger brethren.—5. Young thinkers should be prayerful, humble, watchful; yet faithful to conscience and to truth, trusting in God.—6. With Christian faith goes Christian virtue.—The tendency of unbelief is ever downwards.—7. Unbelievers are not irreclaimable.—We should not pass them by unpitied or unhelped.—8. Converts from infidelity must look for trials.—They must not expect too much from churches and ministers. Paul's case.—9. They must risk all for Christ, and bear their losses and troubles patiently.—10. They should join the Church, right away.—Not look for a perfect Church.—Keep inside.—Bear unpleasantnesses meekly.—Stones made smooth and round in the stream, by the rubbing they get from other stones.—Reformers should move gently, and have long patience.—The more haste the worst speed.—Killing rats.—12. Unbelief, when not a sin, is a terrible calamity: a world of calamities in one,..... 406

CONCLUDING REMARKS,..... 437

Hosted by Google

PREFACE.

THE object of this Book is, First, to explain a portion of my own history, and, Secondly, to check the spread of infidelity, and promote the interests of Christianity. How far it is calculated to answer these ends I do not pretend to know. I have no very high opinion of the work myself. I fear it has great defects. On some points I may have said too much, and on others too little. I cannot tell. I have however done my best, and I would fain hope, that my labors will not prove to have been altogether in vain.

I have spent considerable time with a view to bring my readers to distinguish between the doctrines of Christ, and the theological fictions which are so extensively propagated in His name. It is exceedingly desirable that nothing should pass for Christianity, but Christianity itself. And it is equally desirable that Christianity should be seen in its true light, as presented in the teachings and character, in the life and death of its great Author. A correct exposition of Christianity is its best defence. A true, a plain, a faithful and just exhibition of its spirit and teachings, and of its adaptation to the wants of man, and of its tendency to promote his highest welfare, is the best answer to all objections, and the most convincing proof of its truth and divinity. And the truth, the reasonableness, the consistency, the purifying and ennobling tendency, and the unequalled consoling power of Christianity, *can* be proved, and proved with comparative ease; but to defend the nonsense, the contradictions, the antinomianism and the blasphemies of theology is impossible.

I have taken special pains to explain my views on the

Hosted by Google

Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures. I am satisfied that no attempts to answer the objections of infidels against the Bible will prove satisfactory, so long as men's views on this subject go beyond the teachings of the Scriptures themselves. To the fanciful theories of a large number of Theologians the sacred writings do not answer, and you must therefore, either set aside those theories, and put a more moderate one in their place, or give up the defence of the Bible in despair. I therefore leave the extravagant theories to their fate, and content myself with what the Scriptures themselves say; and I feel at rest and secure.

The views I have given on the subject in this work, and in my pamphlet on the Bible, are not new. You may find them in the works of quite a number of Evangelical Authors. The only credit to which I am entitled is, that I state them with great plainness, and without reserve, and that I do not, after having given them on one page, take them back again on the next.

How far my friends will be able to receive or tolerate my views on these points, I do not know. I hope they will ponder them with all the candor and charity they can. I have kept as near to orthodox standards as I could, without doing violence to my conscience, and injustice to the truth. I would never be singular, if I could honestly help it. It is nothing but a regard to God, and duty, and the interests of humanity, that prevents me going with the multitude. It would be gratifying in the extreme to see truth and the majority on one side, and to be permitted to take my place with them: but if the majority take sides with error, I must take my place with the minority, and look for my comfort in a good conscience, and in the sweet assurance of God's love and favor.

A Dream.

In looking over some manuscripts some time ago, belonging to a relation of my wife's father-in-law, I found the following story of a dream. Some have no regard for dreams, but I have. I have both read of dreams, and had dreams myself, that answered marvellously to great realities; and this may be one of that kind. In any case,

Hosted by Google

as the Preface does not take up all the space set apart for it, I am disposed to give it a few of the vacant pages.

The dreamer's account of his dream is as follows.

'After tiring my brain one day with reading a long debate between a Catholic and a Protestant about the Infallibility of the Church and the Bible, I took a walk along a quiet field-path near the river, full of thought on the subject on which I had been reading. The fresh air, the pleasant scene, and the ripple of the stream, had such a soothing effect on me, that I lost myself, and passed unconsciously from the World of realities, into the Land of dreams. I found myself in a large Hall, filled with an eager crowd, listening to a number of men who had assembled, as I was told, to discuss the affairs of the Universe, and put an end to controversy. The subject under discussion just then was the Sun. I found that after the world had lived in its light for thousands of years, and been happy in the abundance of the fruit, and grain, and numberless blessings produced by his wondrous influences, some one, who had looked at the Great Light through a powerful telescope, had discovered that there were several dark spots on his disk or face, and that some of them were of a very considerable size. He named the matter to a number of his friends who, looking through the telescope for themselves, saw that such was really the case.

'Now there happened to be an order of persons in the Land of dreams whose business it was to praise the Sun, and extol its Light. And they had a theory to the effect, that the Light of the Sun was unmixed, and that the Sun itself was one uniform mass of brightness and brilliancy, without speck, or spot, or any such thing. They held that the Head of their order was the Maker of the Sun,—that He Himself was Light, and that in Him was no darkness at all; and that the Sun was exactly like Him, intense, unmingled, and unvarying Light. When these people heard of the alleged discovery of the spots, they raised a tremendous cry, and some howled, and some shrieked, and all united in pronouncing the statement a fiction, and in denouncing in severe terms, both its author, and all who took his part, as deceivers; as the enemies of the Sun, as blasphemers of its Author, and as the enemies of the human race.

Hosted by Google

'This was one of the great controversies which this world-wide convention had met to bring to an end.

'As I took my place in the Hall, one of the Professors of the Solar University was speaking. He said the story about the spots was a wicked calumny; and he went into a lengthy and labored argument to show, that the thing was absurd and impossible. 'The Sun,' said he, 'was made by an All-perfect Artificer,—made on purpose to be a Light, the Great Light of the world, and a Light it must be, and nothing else but a Light; a pure unsullied Light all round, without either spot, or speck of any kind, or any varying shade of brilliancy in any part.' He added, 'To say the contrary, is to do the Sun injustice, to dishonor its All-glorious Author, to alienate the minds of men from the Heavenly Luminary, to destroy their faith in his Light and warmth, to plunge the world into darkness, and reduce it to a state of utter desolation. If the Sun is not *all* light, he is *no* Light at all. If there be dark spots on one part of his face, there may be dark spots on every part. '*All* may be dark, and what seems Light may be an illusion; a false Light, 'that leads to bewilder, and dazzles to blind.' He is not to be trusted. Every thing is uncertain.' And he called the man who said he had seen the spots, an impostor, a blasphemer, a *scavenger*, an ass, a foreigner, and a number of other strange names.

'The man he was abusing so unmercifully, stepped forward, and in a meek and quiet spirit said, 'I saw the spots with my own eyes. I have seen them scores of times. I can show them to you, if you will look through this glass.' 'Your glass is a cheat, a lie,' said the Professor. 'But others have seen them,' said the man, 'as well as I, and seen them through a number of other glasses.'

'It is impossible,' answered the Professor. 'A Sun made by an All-perfect God, and made on purpose to be a Light, cannot possibly be defaced with dark spots; and whoever says any thing to the contrary is a ——.'

'Here the Professor rested his case;—'A Sun without spots, or no Sun. Light without variation of shade, or no Light. Prove that the Sun has spots, and you reduce him to a level with an old extinguished lamp, that is fit for nothing but to be cast away as an unclean and worthless

Hosted by Google

thing. The honor of God, and the welfare of the universe all hang on this one question,—Spots, or no spots!'

'His fellow professors took his part, and many spoke in the same strain. But the belief in the spots made its way, and spread further every day, and the consequence was, the obstinate Professors were confounded and put to shame. Facts were too strong for them, and their credit and influence were damaged beyond remedy.

'After the Professors of the Sun were silenced, the Man in the Moon arose and spoke. He contended that both Sun and Moon were free from spots, but said, that no one could see the Sun as it really was, unless he *lived* in the Moon, and looked at it from his standpoint. 'The Moon,' said he, 'like the Sun, is the work of the All-perfect Creator; and its face is one unchanging blaze of absolute and unvaried brightness.'

'Now all who had ever looked at the Moon, had noticed, that no part of her face was as bright as the Sun, and that some portions were of a shade considerably darker than the rest. And I noticed that even the Professors who had spoken extravagantly about the Sun, looked at each other and smiled, when they heard the statements of the Man in the Moon. Indeed there was such a tittering and a giggling through the Hall, that the meeting was broken up.

'I hastened out, and found there were a hundred discussions going on in the street. Many of the disputants seemed greatly excited. I felt melancholy. A quiet-looking man, with a very gentle expression of countenance, came up to me, and in tones of remarkable sweetness, said, 'You seem moved.' 'I feel troubled,' said I. 'I don't know what to think; and I don't know what to do.' He smiled, and said, 'None of these things move me.' Then lifting up his eyes towards Heaven he said,—'The Sun still shines; and I feel his blessed warmth as sensibly as ever. And the millions of our race still live and rejoice in his beams.' 'Thank God,' said I: 'Yes, I see, he still shines; and I will rest contented with his light and warmth.' 'The spots are there,' said he, 'past doubt; but experience, the strongest evidence of all, proves that they do not interfere with the beneficent influences of the Great and Glorious Orb, or lessen his claims to our respect and veneration, or dimi-

Hosted by Google

nish one jot our obligations to his great Author. They have their use, no doubt. The Sun might be too brilliant without them, and destroy our eyes, instead of giving us light. Too much light might prove as bad as too little. All is well. I accept plain facts. To deny them is to fight against God. To admit them and trust in God is the true faith, and the germ of all true virtue and piety.

'I have no faith in the kind of absolute perfection those professors contend for, either in Sun or Moon, Bible or Church; but I believe in the SUFFICIENCY, or *practical* perfection of all, and am as happy, and only wish I were as good and useful, as ——'

'Just as he spoke those words, I awoke. He seemed as if he had much to say, and I would fain have heard him talk his sweet talk till now; but perhaps I had heard enough, and ought now to set myself heartily to work, to get through with the business of my life.'

So ends the Dream-story.

Some writers seem to think that their readers should understand and receive their views, however new and strange they may be, the moment they place them before their minds. They cannot understand how that which is clear to them, should not be plain to everybody else. And there are some readers who seem to think, that every thing they meet with in the books they read, however much it may be out of the way of their ordinary thought, or however contrary to their long-cherished belief, should, if it be really intelligible and true, appear so to them at first glance. How can anything seem mysterious or untrue to them, that is not mysterious or untrue in its very nature?

It so happened, that along with the dream-story, I found the following fragment. It is not an interpretation of the dream, but it seems as if it might teach a useful lesson, both to writers and readers.

'Something more than light, and eyes, and surrounding objects, is necessary to seeing. A new-born child may have light, and eyes, and surrounding objects, and yet not see anything distinctly. And a man born blind may have the film removed from his eyes, and be placed, at noontide, in the midst of a world of interesting objects, and yet, instead of seeing things, as *we* see them, have nothing but a

Hosted by Google

confounding and distressing sensation. Seeing, as *we* see, is the result of habit, acquired by long-continued use. The new-born babe must have time to exercise its eyes, and exercise its little mind as well, before it can distinguish face from face, and form from form. The man who has just received his sight must have time for similar exercise, before he can enjoy the rich pleasures and advantages of sight to perfection. Even we who have had our sight for fifty years do not see as many things in a picture, a landscape, or a bed of flowers, when we see them for the first time, as those who have been accustomed to inspect and examine such objects for years.

'And so it is with mental and moral vision. Something more than a mind, and instruction, and mental objects are necessary to enable a man to understand religion and duty. Attention, study, comparison, continued with calmness, and candor, and patience, for days, for months, or for years, may be necessary to enable a skeptic to understand, to believe, and to feel like those who have long been disciples of Christ.

'And a change of habits, continued till it produces a change of tastes and desires, is necessary to prepare the sensualist to judge correctly with regard to things moral and religious. We must not therefore expect a good lecture, or an able book, to cure a skeptic of his doubts at once. It may produce an effect which, in time, if the party be faithful to duty, will *end* in his conversion at a future day. The seed committed to the soil does not produce rich harvests in a day. A change of air and habits does not at once regenerate the invalid. The husbandman has to wait long for his crop: and the physician has to wait long for the recovery of his patient. And the skeptic has to wait long, till the seed of truth, deposited in his soul, unfolds its germs, and produces the rich ripe harvest of faith, and holiness, and joy.

'And preachers and teachers must not think it strange, if their hearers and readers are slow to change. Nor must they despond even though no signs of improvement appear for months or years. A change for the better in a student may not be manifest till it has been in progress for years. It may not be perfected for many years. You cannot force a

Hosted by Google

change of mind, as you can force the growth of a plant in a hot-house. An attempt to do so might stop it altogether. Baxter said, two hundred years ago, 'Nothing so much hindereth the reception of the truth, as urging it on men with too much importunity, and falling too heavily on their errors.'

'Have patience, then. Teach, as your pupil may be prepared to learn, but respect the laws of the Eternal, which have fixed long intervals for slow and silent processes, between the seed-time and the harvest-home.'

While I am in doubt as to whether I have put into my book too much on some subjects, I am thoroughly convinced that I have put into it too little on others. I have not said enough, nor half enough, on Atheism. I ought to have exposed its groundlessness, its folly, and its mischievous and miserable tendency at considerable length.

This defect I shall try to remedy as soon as possible, and in the best way I can.

Some weeks ago I read a paper before the M. E. Preachers' Meeting of Philadelphia, on ATHEISM,—what can it say for itself? The paper was received with great favor, and many asked for its publication. It will form the first article in my next volume.

I expect, in fact, to give the subject of Atheism a pretty thorough examination in that volume, and to show that it is irrational and demoralizing from beginning to end, and to the last extreme.

John Stuart Mill, the head and representative of English Literary and Philosophical Atheists, has left us a history of his life, and of his father's life. In this work he presents us with full length portraits of himself and his father, and both gives us their reasons for being Atheists, and reveals to us the influence of their Atheism on their hearts and characters, as well as on their views on morality, politics, and other important subjects.

And though the painter, as we might expect, flatters to some extent both himself and his father, yet he gives us the more important features of both so truthfully, that we have no difficulty in learning from them, what kind of creatures great Philosophical Atheists are, or in gathering from their works a great amount of information about

Hosted by Google

infidelity, of the most melancholy, but of the most interesting and important character.

This Autobiography of Mr. Mill I propose to review. I meant to review it in this volume, but I had not room. I intend therefore to give it a place in my next volume, which may be looked for in the course of the year.

Another work has just been published, called *The Old Faith and the New.* It is the last and most important work of D. F. Strauss, the greatest and ablest advocate of antichristian and atheistic views that the ages have produced,—the Colossus or Goliath of all the infidel hosts of Christendom. In this work, which he calls his CONFESSION, Strauss, like Mill, gives us a portrait of himself, exhibiting not only his views, and the arguments by which he labors to sustain them, but the influence of those views on the hearts, the lives, the characters, and the enjoyments of men. If this Book can be answered,—if the arguments of Strauss can be fairly met, and his views effectually refuted, infidelity must suffer serious damage, and the cause of Christianity be greatly benefited. I have gone through the Book with great care. I have measured and weighed its arguments. And my conviction is, that the work admits of a thorough and satisfactory refutation. If I had had space, I should have made some remarks on it in this volume: but I had not. I propose therefore to review it at considerable length in my next.

Some time ago Robert Owen was a prominent man in the infidel world. He was extolled by his friends as a great Philanthropist. He too left us a history of his life, and his son, Robert Dale Owen, has just been repeating portions of that history in the Atlantic Monthly. It may be interesting to my readers to know what Atheism can do in the way of Philanthropy. We propose therefore to add a review of the Life of Robert Owen to those of Strauss and Mill.

Robert Dale Owen himself was an Atheist formerly, and a very zealous and able advocate of Atheistical views. He gives his articles in the Atlantic Monthly as an autobiography, and seeks to make the impression that he has revealed to his readers all the important facts of his history without reserve. And he has certainly revealed some

Hosted by Google

strange things. But there are certain facts which he has *not* revealed, facts of great importance too, calculated to show the demoralizing tendency of infidelity. We propose to render the autobiography of Mr. Dale Owen more complete, more interesting, and more instructive, by the addition of some of those facts.

Frances or Fanny Wright was a friend of Mr. Dale Owen's. She was the great representative female Atheist of her time. Like Mr. Dale Owen's father, she was rich, and like him, seemed desirous to do something in the way of philanthropy. Mr. Dale Owen, who was her agent for some time, gives us some interesting facts with regard to her history, which may prove of service to our readers.

In Buckle we have an Atheistical Historian, who endeavors to prove that we are indebted for all the advantages of our superior civilization, not to Christianity, but to natural science and skepticism alone. He represents Christianity as the enemy of science, and as the great impediment to the advance of civilization. These views of Buckle we regard as false and foolish to the last extreme, and we expect to be able to show that Europe and America are indebted for their superior civilization, and even for their rich treasures of natural science, *not* to infidelity, but to the influence of Christianity.

Matthew Arnold has just published an interesting book entitled LITERATURE AND DOGMA. It is however a mixed work; and we propose, while noticing a number of its beautiful utterances, to make a few remarks on some of its objectionable sentiments.

There is a great multitude of important facts with regard to Christianity,—facts which can be understood and appreciated by persons of ordinary capacity, and which no man of intelligence and candor will be disposed to call in question; yet facts of such a character as cannot fail, when duly considered, to leave the impression on men's minds, that Christianity is the perfection of all wisdom and goodness, and worthy of acceptance as a revelation from an all-perfect God, and as the mightiest and most beneficent friend of mankind. A number of those facts we propose to give in our next volume.

Hosted by Google

MODERN SKEPTICISM.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

WHEN a man has travelled far, and seen strange lands, and dwelt among strange peoples, and encountered unusual dangers, it is natural, on his return home, that he should feel disposed to communicate to his family and friends some of the incidents of his travels, and some of the discoveries which he may have made on his way.

So when a man has travelled far along the way of life, especially if he has ventured on strange paths, and come in contact with strange characters, and had altogether a large and varied experience, it is natural, as he draws near to the end of his journey, or when he reaches one of its more important stages, that he should feel disposed to communicate to his friends and kindred some of the incidents of his life's pilgrimage, and some of the lessons which his experience may have engraven on his heart. He will especially be anxious to guard those who have life's journey yet before them, against the errors into which he may have fallen, and so preserve them from the sorrows that he may have had to endure.

And so it is with me. I have travelled far along the way of life. I may now be near its close. I have certainly of late passed one of its most important stages. I have had a somewhat eventful journey. There are but few perhaps who have had a larger or more varied experience.

Hosted by Google

I have committed great errors, and I have in consequence passed through grievous sorrows; and I would fain do something towards saving those who come after me from similar errors and from similar sorrows: and this is the object of the work before you.

At an early period, when I was little more than sixteen years of age, I became a member of the Methodist society. Before I was twenty I became a local preacher. Before I was twenty-three I became a travelling preacher; and after I had got over the first great difficulties of my calling, I was happy in my work; as happy as a mortal man need wish to be. It was my delight to read good books, to study God's Word and works, and to store my mind with useful knowledge. To preach the Gospel, to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, and to promote the instruction and improvement of God's people were the joy and rejoicing of my soul. There were times, and those not a few, when I could sing with Wesley—

"In a rapture of joy my life I employ,
The God of my life to proclaim:
'Tis worth living for this, to administer bliss
And salvation in Jesus's name."

And I was very successful in my work. I never travelled in a circuit in which there was not a considerable increase of members, and in one place where I was stationed, the numbers in church-fellowship were more than doubled in less than eighteen months.

In those days it never once entered my mind that I could ever be anything else but a Christian minister: yet in course of time I ceased to be one; ceased to be even a Christian. I was severed first from the Church, and then from Christ, and I wandered at length far away into the regions of doubt and unbelief, and came near to the outermost confines of eternal night. And the question arises,

How happened this? And how happened it that, after having wandered so far away, I was permitted to return to my present happy position?

These two questions I shall endeavor, to the best of my ability, to answer.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER II.

CAUSES OF UNBELIEF.

HOW came I to wander into doubt and unbelief?

1. There are several causes of skepticism and infidelity. One is vice. When a man is bent on forbidden pleasures, he finds it hard to believe in the truth and divinity of a religion that condemns his vicious indulgences. And the longer he persists in his evil course, the darker becomes his understanding, the more corrupt his tastes, and the more perverse his judgment; until at length he "puts darkness for light, and light for darkness; calls evil good and good evil, and mistakes bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." He becomes an infidel. It is the decree of Heaven that men who persist in seeking pleasure in unrighteousness, shall be given up to strong delusions of the devil to believe a lie.

2. But there are other causes of skepticism and unbelief besides vice. Thomas was an unbeliever for a time,—a very resolute one,—yet the Gospel gives no intimation that he was chargeable with any form of vice. And John the Baptist, one of the noblest characters in sacred history, after having proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah to others, came himself to doubt, whether He was really "the one that should come, or they should look for another." Like the early disciples of the Saviour, and the Jewish people generally, John expected the Messiah to take the throne of David by force, and to rule as a temporal prince; and when Jesus took a course so very different, his confidence in his Messiahship was shaken. And one of the sweetest Psalmists tells us that, as for him, his feet were almost gone; his steps had well-nigh slipped: and that, not because he was eager for sinful pleasures, but because he saw darkness and clouds around the Providence of God: he could not understand or "justify the ways of God to man."

And there are thoughtful and good men still who fall into doubt and unbelief from similar causes. The kind of

Hosted by Google

people who, like Thomas, are constitutionally inclined to doubt, are not all dead. Baxter mentions a class of men who lived in his day, that were always craving for sensible demonstrations. Like Thomas, they wanted to *see* and *feel* before they believed. In other words, they were not content with faith: they wanted *knowledge*. And there are men of that kind still in the world.

And the darkness and clouds which the Psalmist saw around the providence of God are not all gone. There are many things in connection with the government of the world that are hard to be understood,—hard to be reconciled by many with their ideas of what is right. There are mysteries both in nature and in history, which baffle the minds and try the faith of the best and wisest of our race.

3. And there are matters in connection with Christianity to try the faith of men. Like its great Author, when it first made its appearance, it had "neither form nor comeliness" in the eyes of many. It neither met the expectations of the selfish, proud, ambitious Jew, nor of the disputatious, philosophic Greek. To the one "it was a stumbling-block," and to the other "foolishness." And there have been men in every age, who have been unable to find in Christianity all that their preconceived notions had led them to expect in a religion from Heaven. There are men still, even among the sincerest and devoutest friends of Christianity, who are puzzled and staggered at times by the mysterious aspects of some of its doctrines, or by some of the facts connected with its history. They cannot understand, for instance, how it is that it has not spread more rapidly, and become, before this, the religion of the whole world. You tell them the fault is in its disciples and ministers, and not in Christianity itself. But they cannot understand why God should allow the success of a system so important to depend on faithless or fallible men. Nor can they understand how it is that in the nations in which the Gospel has been received, it has not worked a greater transformation of character, and produced a happier change in their condition. How is it, they ask, that it has not extinguished the spirit of war, destroyed the sordid lust for gain, developed more fully the spirit of self-sacrificing generosity, and converted society into one great brotherhood of love? How

Hosted by Google

is it that the Church is not more holy, more united, and more prosperous,—that professors and teachers of Christianity do not exhibit more of the Christian character, and follow more closely the example of the meek and lowly, the loving and laborious, the condescending and self-sacrificing Saviour whose name they bear? They are amazed that so little is done by professing Christians to save the perishing classes; that so many of the churches, instead of grappling with the vice and wretchedness of our large towns, turn their backs on them, build their churches in aristocratic neighborhoods mostly, and compete with one another for the favor of the rich and powerful. They cannot understand how it is, that churches and ministers do not exert themselves more for the extinction of drunkenness, gambling, and licentiousness, and for the suppression of all trades and customs that minister to sin. It startles them to see to what a fearful extent the churches have allowed the power of the press, which once was all their own, to pass out of their hands, into the hands of selfish, worldly, and godless adventurers. These matters admit of explanation, but there are many to whose minds the explanation is never presented, and there are some whom nothing will relieve from perplexity and doubt but a grander display of Christian zeal and philanthropic effort, on the part of the churches, for the regeneration of society.

4. Then the religion of Christ is not, as a rule, presented to men in its loveliest and most winning, or in its grandest and most overpowering form. As presented in the teachings and character of Christ, Christianity is the perfection of wisdom and goodness, the most glorious revelation of God and duty the mind of man can conceive: but as presented in the creeds, and characters, and writings of many of its teachers and advocates, it has neither beauty, nor worth, nor credibility. Some teach only a very small portion of Christianity, and the portion they teach they often teach amiss. Some doctrines they exaggerate, and others they maim. Some they caricature, distort, or pervert. And many add to the Gospel inventions of their own, or foolish traditions received from their fathers; and the truth is hid under a mass of error. Many conceal and disfigure the truth by putting it in an antiquated and outlandish dress.

Hosted by Google

The language of many theologians, like the Latin of the Romish Church, is, to vast numbers, a dead language,—an unknown tongue. There are hundreds of words and phrases used by preachers and religious writers which neither they nor their hearers or readers understand. In some of them there is nothing to be understood. They are mere words; meaningless sounds. Some of them have meanings, but they are hard to come at, and when you have got at them you find them to be worse than none. They are falsehoods that lurk within the dark and antiquated words. I have heard and even read whole sermons in which nine sentences out of ten had no more meaning in them than the chatter of an ape. Perhaps not so much. I have gone through large volumes and found hardly a respectable, plain-meaning sentence from beginning to end. And wagon loads of so-called religious books may still be found, in which, as in the talk of one of Shakespeare's characters, the ideas are to the words as three grains of wheat to a bushel of chaff; you may search for them all day before you find them; and when you find them they are good for nothing. When I first came across such books I supposed it was my ignorance or want of capacity that made it impossible for me to understand them; but I found, at length, that there was nothing in them to understand. There are other books which have a meaning, a good meaning, but it is wrapped up in such out-of-the-way words and phrases, that it is difficult to get at it. Men of science have not only discarded the foolish fictions of darker ages, but have begun to simplify their language; to cast aside the unspeakable and unintelligible jargon of the past, and to use plain, good, common English, thus rendering the study of nature pleasant even to children; while many divines, by clinging to the unmeaning and mischievous phraseology of ancient dreamers, render the study of religion repulsive, and the attainment of sound Christian knowledge almost impossible to the masses of mankind. And all these things become occasions of unbelief. "So long as Christian preachers and writers are limited so much to human creeds and systems, or to stereotyped phrases of any kind, and avail themselves so little of the popular diction of literature and of common life, so long must they repel many whom they might convince and win." Dr. Porter, *President of Yale College.*

Hosted by Google

5. Then again: the divisions of the Church, and the uncharitable spirit in which points of difference between contending sects are discussed, and the disposition sometimes shown by religious disputants to impugn each other's motives, to call each other offensive names, and to consign each other to perdition, are occasions of stumbling to some.

6. And again: many advocates of Christianity, more zealous than wise, say more about the Bible and Christianity than is true, and attempt to prove points which do not admit of proof; and by their unguarded assertions, and their failures in argument, bring the truth itself into discredit. Others use unsound arguments in support of the truth, and when men discover the unsoundness of the arguments, they are led sometimes to suspect the soundness of the doctrine in behalf of which they are employed. The pious frauds of ancient and modern fanatics have proved a stumbling-block to thousands.

Albert Barnes says, "There is no class of men that are so liable to rely on weak and inconclusive reasonings as preachers of the Gospel. Many a young man in a Theological Seminary is on the verge of infidelity from the nature of the reasoning employed by his instructor in defence of that which is true, and which might be well defended: and many a youth in our congregations is almost or quite a skeptic, not because he wishes to be so, but because that which is true is supported by such worthless arguments."

7. Again; theological students sometimes adopt erroneous principles or unwise methods of reasoning in their search after truth, and do not discover their mistake till they are landed in doubt and unbelief. They find certain principles laid down by men in high repute for science, and adopt them without hesitation, not considering that men of science are sometimes mad, fanatical infidels, and that they manufacture principles without regard to truth, for the simple purpose of undermining men's faith in God and religion. Writers on science of one school tell you, that in your study of nature, you must be careful never to admit the doctrine of final causes; or, in other words, that you must never entertain the idea that anything in nature was meant to answer any particular purpose. You must, say they, if you would be a true philosopher, shut out from your mind all idea of de-

Hosted by Google

sign or contrivance in the works of nature. You must just look at what is, and not ask what it is for. You may find wonderful adaptations of things to each other, all tending to happy results; but you must never suppose that any one ever *designed* or *planned* those adaptations, with a *view* to those happy results. You must confine yourself entirely to what you see, and never admit the thought of a Maker whom you do not see. You must limit your observations to what is done, and not dream of a Doer. You may see things tending to the diffusion of happiness, but must not suppose that there is a great unseen Benefactor, who gives them this blessed tendency. And if you feel in yourself a disposition to gratitude, you must treat it as a foolish, childish fancy, and suppress it as irrational.

A sillier or a more contemptible notion—a notion more opposed to true philosophy and common sense,—can hardly be conceived. How any one could ever have the ignorance or the impudence to propound such an unnatural and monstrous absurdity as a great philosophical principle, would be a mystery, if we did not know how infidelity perverts men's understandings, and, while puffing them up with infinite conceit of their own wisdom, transforms them into the most arrant and outrageous fools.

Yet this monstrous folly has found its way into books, and papers, and reviews, and, through them, into the minds of some Christian students; and when the madness of the notion is not detected, it destroys their faith, and makes them miserable infidels.

Some adopt the principle that reason is man's only guide, —that reason alone is judge of what is true and good, and that to reason every thing must be submitted, and received or rejected, done or left undone, as reason may decide. This sounds very plausible to many, and there is a sense in which it may be true; but there is a sense in which it is fearfully false; and the youth that adopts it, and acts upon it, will be likely to land himself in utter doubt, both with regard to religion and morals. There are numbers of cases in which reason is no guide at all,—in which instinct, natural affection, and consciousness are our only guides. You can never prove by what is generally called reason alone, that man is not a machine, governed entirely by forces over

Hosted by Google

which he has no control. You cannot therefore prove by what certain philosophers call reason, that any man is worthy of reward or punishment, of praise or blame, of gratitude or of resentment; or that there is any such thing in men as virtue or vice, according to the ordinary sense of the words. The ablest logicians on earth, when they take reason alone as their guide, come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as liberty or moral responsibility, in the ordinary acceptation of the terms, but that all is fixed, that all is fate, from eternity to eternity. They accordingly come to the further conclusion, that there is no free, voluntary Ruler of the universe,—that there is no Almighty Judge and Rewarder,—that there is neither reward nor punishment, properly speaking, either in this world or in the world to come. They become atheists.

You can never prove by reason that a woman ought to love her own child better than the child of another woman. You cannot prove by reason that she ought to love it at all. You may say no children would be reared if mothers did not love their children, and even love them better than the children of other mothers. But how will you prove that children *ought* to be reared? Can you show that the mother will confer any advantage on her child, or secure any advantage to herself, or any one else, by rearing it? Can you prove that it will not be a torment to her,—that it will not bring her to want, and shame, and an untimely death? The fact is, a mother's love, a mother's partiality for her own child, is not a matter of reason. The hen loves her chickens, the she bear loves its cubs, the mother dog loves its whelps, and the ewe loves her lambs, without any regard to reason. Their affections and preferences are governed by something infinitely wiser than reason; infinitely higher, at least, than any reason that *man* can boast. And men love women, and women love men, and men and women marry and form new families, not at the bidding of reason, but under the influence of instincts or impulses that come from a wisdom infinitely higher than the wisdom of the wisest man on earth. And so it is with many of our beliefs. They are instinctive; and reason, when it becomes reasonable enough to deserve the name, will advise you to cherish those instinctive beliefs as your life, in spite of all the infidel philosophy and reasoning on earth.

Hosted by Google

But even honest and well-disposed men of science sometimes form bad, defective, or one-sided habits of thought and judgment unconsciously, which render it impossible for them to do justice either to Nature or Christianity as revelations of the character and government of God. And these faulty habits of thought and judgment, and the anti-Christian conclusions to which they lead, pass on from men of science to literary men; and literature is vitiated, and books and periodicals which should lead men to truth, cause them to err. Thus skeptical principles pervade society. They find advocates at times even among men who call themselves ministers of Christ. The consequence is, that well-disposed, and even pious young men, are perplexed, bewildered, and some who, like John the Baptist, were "burning and shining lights," become "wandering stars," and lose themselves, for a time at least, amidst the "blackness and darkness" of doubt and despair.

CHAPTER III.

ANOTHER CAUSE OF UNBELIEF—BAD FEELING. THE AUTHOR'S CASE.

THERE are several other causes of doubt and unbelief which we might name, if we had time; but we have not. There is one however which we must notice, because it had considerable influence in our own case; we refer to the bad feeling which sometimes takes possession of the minds of Christians towards each other, or of the minds of ministers towards their brother ministers.

You are aware, perhaps, that if you scratch the skin, and introduce a little diseased animal matter to the blood, it will gradually spread itself through the system, and in time poison the whole body. And if you do not know this, you know, that if you take a little leaven, and place it in a mass of meal, and leave it there to work unchecked, it will in time leaven the whole lump. And as it is with things natural, so it is with things spiritual. If you allow a little leaven of bad feeling to get into your minds towards your fellow

Hosted by Google

Christians or your brother ministers, and permit it to remain there, it will in time infect your whole soul, impair the action of all its faculties, and after alienating you from individuals, separate you first from the Church, and then from Christ and Christianity.

There is a passage in the Bible which says that judges are not to take gifts; and the reason assigned is, not that if a judge accepts a present he will, with his eyes open, wilfully condemn the innocent or acquit the guilty; but that "a gift *blindeth the eyes*," even "of the wise," so that he is no longer able to see clearly which is the guilty and which the guiltless party. And there is another passage in the Bible which says that "oppression driveth a wise man mad." The feeling a man has that he has been wickedly, cruelly treated, excites his mind so painfully and violently, that it is impossible for him to think well of the character or views of his oppressor, or of any party, institution, or system with which he may be connected.

As some friends of mine were canvassing for votes one day, previous to an election, they came upon a man who could not, for a time, say for which candidate he would vote. At length a thought struck him, and he said, "Who is John Myers going to vote for?" "Oh," said my friends, "he's going to vote for *our* man." "Then I'll vote for the other man," said he, "for I'm sure Myers will vote wrong." Myers had swindled him in a business transaction; and his feelings towards him were so strong, and of so unpleasant a kind, that he could not think anything right that Myers did, nor could he think anything wrong that he himself did, so long as he took care to go contrary to Myers.

It is very natural to smile at such weakness when we see it in others, and yet exhibit unconsciously the same weakness ourselves under another form. There are some Christians who, when their minister pleases them well, are quite delighted with his discourses. They are "marrow and fatness" to their souls. And every sermon he preaches seems better than the one that went before; and they feel as if they could sit under that dear good man for ever. But a change comes over their feelings with regard to him. While going his round of pastoral visits some day, he passes their door, but calls at the house of a richer neighbor a little lower

Hosted by Google

down: or on visiting the Sunday-school, he pats some one's little boy on the head, and speaks to him kind and pleasant words, while he passes their little son unnoticed. He has no improper design in what he does; but it happens so; that is all. The idea of partiality never enters his mind. But they fancy he has got something wrong in his mind towards them; and it is certain now that they have got something wrong in their minds towards him. And now his sermons are quite changed. The "marrow and fatness" are all gone, and there is nothing left but "the husks which the swine should eat." And every sermon he preaches seems worse than the one which went before, until at length they get quite weary, and their only comfort is, if they be Methodists, that Conference will come some day, and they will have a change. And all this time the preacher is just the same good man he ever was, and his sermons are the same; only *they* are changed. They have misjudged him, and become the subjects of unhappy feeling, and are no longer capable of doing either him or his sermons justice.

And the longer the unhappy feeling is allowed to remain in their minds, the stronger it will become, and the more mischievous will it prove. After disabling or perverting their judgments with regard to their pastor, it will be in danger of separating them from the Church; and when once they get out of the Church into the outside world, no wonder if they make shipwreck both of faith and of a good conscience.

And so it is continually. Our views of men's characters, talents, sentiments, are always more or less influenced by our feelings and affections. If we like a man very much, we look on his views in the most favorable light, and are glad to see anything like a reason for adopting them ourselves. We give his words and deeds the most favorable interpretation, and we rate his gifts and graces above their real value. On the other hand, if we dislike a man,—if we are led to regard him as an enemy, and to harbor feelings of resentment towards him, we look on what he says and does with distrust; we suspect his motives; we underrate his talents, and are pleased to have an excuse for differing from him in opinion.

Hosted by Google

We see proofs of this power of feeling and affection over the judgment on every hand. The mother of that ordinary-looking and troublesome child thinks it the most beautiful and engaging little creature under heaven; while she wonders how people can have patience with her neighbor's child, which, in truth, is quite a cherub or an angel compared with her's. You know how it is with natural light. You sit inside an ancient cathedral, and the light from the bright shining sun streams in through the painted windows. Outside the cathedral the light is all pure white; but inside, as it falls upon the pulpit, the pillars, the pews and the people, it is purple, orange, violet, blue, red, or green, according to the color of the glass through which it passes. It is the same with moral or spiritual light; it takes the tint or hue of the painted windows of our passions and prejudices, our likes and dislikes, through which it enters our minds. The light that finds its way into men's minds, says Bacon, is never pure, white light; but light colored by the medium through which it passes. Look where we will, whether into books or into the living world, we see differences of opinion on men and things that can be accounted for on no other principle than that the judgments of people are influenced by their passions and feelings, their prejudices and interests. The Royalists looked on Cromwell through spectacles of hate and vengeance, and saw a monster of hypocrisy and blood. The Puritans looked at him through spectacles of revolutionary fanaticism, and saw a glorious saint and hero. The clergy looked on Nonconformists through conservative glasses, and saw a rabble of fanatics and rebels. The Nonconformists looked on the clergy through revolutionary glasses, and saw a host of superstitious formalists, and blind, persecuting Pharisees. The man who looks through the unstained glasses of impartiality, sees much that is good, and something that is not good, in all.

Who, that knows much of human nature, expects Catholics to judge righteously of Protestants, or Protestants to judge righteously of Catholics? Who, that knows anything of the world, expects revolutionary Radicals to do justice to the characters and motives of Conservatives, or ejected Irishmen to see anything in Englishmen but robbers

Hosted by Google

and tyrants? I know that all this is great weakness, but where is the man that is not weak? The man who thinks himself free from this weakness, has probably a double share of it. The man who is really strong is some one who is keenly sensible of his weakness, and who feels that his sufficiency is of God. Weakness and humanity are one.

I dwell the longer on this point because, as I have already intimated, a right understanding of it will go far towards explaining the disastrous change which took place in my own mind with regard to Christianity. One great cause of my separation from the Church, and then of my estrangement from Christ, was the influence of bad feeling which took possession of my mind towards a number of my brother ministers.

CHAPTER IV.

ORIGIN OF THE UNHAPPY FEELING—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUTHOR'S MIND—RATIONALIZING TENDENCY.

HOW came I to be the subject of this bad feeling? I will tell you.

As a young minister I had two or three marked tendencies. One may be called a rationalizing tendency. I was anxious, in the first place, clearly to understand all my professed beliefs, and to be able, in the second place, to make them plain to others. I never liked to travel in a fog, wrapped round as with a blinding cloud, unable either to see my way, or to get a view of the things with which I was surrounded. I liked a clear, bright sky, with the sun shining full upon my path, and gladdening my eyes with a view of a thousand interesting objects. And so with regard to spiritual matters. I never liked to travel in theological fogs. They pressed on me at the outset of my religious life, on every side, hiding from my view the wonders and the glories of God's word and works; but I never rested in the darkness. I longed and prayed for light with all my soul, and sought for it with all my powers. Regarding the Bible as God's Book, given to

Hosted by Google

man for his instruction and salvation, I resolved, by God's help, to find out both what it said and what it meant, on every important point of truth and duty.

1. I became sensible, very early in life, that the doctrines I had received from my teachers were, in some cases, inconsistent with each other, and that they could not therefore all be true; and I was anxious to get rid of this inconsistency, and to bring the whole of my beliefs into harmony with each other.

2. I was also anxious to bring my views into agreement with the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. I wished every article of my belief to rest, not on the word of man, but on the word of God. I believed it to be my duty to come as near to Christ as possible, both in my views and character. And I wished my style of preaching and teaching to be, like His, the perfection of plainness and simplicity. I felt that my chief mission was to the masses,—that I was called especially to preach and teach the Gospel to the poor; and it was my wish to be able to make it plain to people of the most defective education, and of the humblest capacity.

3. I was further wishful to see an agreement between the doctrines which I gathered from the Sacred Scriptures, and the oracles which came to me from the works of God in nature. If nature and Christianity were from the same All-perfect God, as I believed, their voices must be one. Their lessons of truth and duty must agree. They must have the same end and tendency. Christian precepts must be in harmony with man's mental and bodily constitution. They must be conducive to the development of all man's powers; to the perfection and happiness of his whole being. They must be friendly to the improvement of his condition. They must favor every thing that is conducive to his personal and domestic happiness, and to the social and national welfare of the whole human race. And the doctrines of Christianity must be in harmony with the constitution, and laws, and phenomena of the visible universe. If there be one Great, All-perfect Creator and Governor of the world and of man, then man and the universe, the universe and religion, science and revelation, philosophy and Christianity, the laws of nature and the laws of Christ,

Hosted by Google

must all be one. I wanted to see this oneness, and to feel the sweet sense of it in my soul.

4. I wanted further to see the foundations on which my belief in God and Christ and in the Sacred Scriptures rested, that I might be able to justify my belief both to myself and to others. I wished to have the fullest evidence and assurance of the truth of Christianity I could get, that I might both feel at rest and happy myself, and be able to give rest and comfort to the souls of others.

5. With these objects in view I set to work. I prayed to God, the Great Father of lights, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift, to lead me into all truth, and to furnish me to every good work. I read the Bible with the greatest care. I searched it through and through. I studied it daily, desirous to learn the whole scope and substance of its teachings, on every point both of truth and duty. I marked on the margin of the pages all those passages that struck me by their peculiar clearness, and their fulness of important meaning. These passages I read over again and again, till I got great numbers of them off by heart. I gave each passage a particular mark according to the subject on which it treated. I then copied the whole of these passages into large Note Books, placing all that spake on any particular subject together. I also arranged the passages so far as I was able, in their natural order, that they might throw light on one another, and present the subject on which they treated, in as full and intelligible a light as possible. I divided the pages of my Note Books into two columns, placing the passages which favored one view of a subject in the first column, and those which seemed to favor a different view in the second. I placed in those Note Books passages on matters of duty, as well as on matters of truth. In this way I got nearly all the plainer and more important portions of the Bible arranged in something like systematic order. Having done this, I went through my Books, and put down in writing all that the passages plainly taught, and marked the bearing of their teachings on the various articles of my creed, with a view to bringing my creed, and the teachings of Scripture, into agreement with each other.

6. To help me in these my labors, and to secure myself

Hosted by Google

as far as possible from serious error, I read a multitude of other books, on almost every subject of importance, by authors of almost all varieties of creeds. I read commentaries, sermons, bodies of divinity, and a host of treatises on various points. To the best of my ability I examined the Scriptures in the original languages, as well as in a number of translations, both ancient and modern, including several Latin and French versions, four German ones, and all the English ones that came in my way. I had a number of Lexicons, and of Theological and Bible Dictionaries of which I made free use. I went through the Commentaries of Baxter, Wesley and Adam Clarke with the greatest care, as well as through a huge and somewhat heterodox, but able and excellent work, published by Goadby, entitled, *Illustrations of the Sacred Scriptures.* I do not think I missed a single sentence in these commentaries, or passed unweighed a single word.

I read and studied the writings of Wesley generally, and the works of Fletcher, Benson and Watson. I read Hooker and Taylor also, and Wilkins, and Barrow, and Tillotson, and Butler, and Burnet, and Pearson, and Hoadley. I read the writings of Baxter almost continually. I went through, not only the whole of his voluminous practical works, but many of his doctrinal and controversial ones, including his Catholic Theology, his Aphorisms on Justification, his Confessions, and his most elaborate, comprehensive and wonderful work of all, his *Methodus Theologiæ*, in Latin. In Baxter alone I had a world of materials for thought, on almost every religious and moral subject that can engage the mind of man. And on almost every subject of importance his thoughts seemed rich and wholesome, scriptural and rational in the highest degree. His Christian spirit held me captive, and I never got tired of his earnest, eloquent, and godly talk. Even the old and endless controversies on which he spent so much time and strength, were often rendered interesting by the honesty of his heart, by the abundance of his charity, by the moderation of his views, and by the never-failing good sound sense of his remarks. None of the works I read had such a charm for me as those of Baxter, and no other religious writer exerted so powerful and lasting an influence either on my head or

Hosted by Google

heart. Taylor was too flowery, and Barrow too wordy, and Tillotson was rather cold and formal; yet I read them all with profit, and with a great amount of pleasure. Hooker I found a wonder, both for excellency of style and richness of sentiment; and his piety and wisdom, his candor and his charity, have never been surpassed since the days of Christ and His Apostles. And Hoadley too I liked, and Butler, and Thomas a Kempis, and William Law. And then came Bolton and Howe, and Doddridge and Watts. Then Penn, and Barclay, and Clarkson, and Sewell, and Hales, and Dell caught my attention, giving me interesting revelations of Quaker thought and feeling.

And I was edified by Lactantius and Chrysostom, the most eloquent, rational and practical of the Christian Fathers. By and by came Priestley and Price, and Dr. John Taylor, and W. E. Channing, and a host of others of the modern school of heterodox writers. I also read a number of celebrated French authors, including Bossuet and Bourdaloue, Flechier and Massillon, Pascal and Fenelon, and the eloquent, Protestant preacher and author, M. Saurin. I read the principal works both of Catholics and Protestants, of the Fathers and Reformers, of Churchmen and Dissenters, of Quakers and Mystics, of Methodists and Calvinists, of Unitarians and Infidels.

I read several works on Law and Government, including Puffendorf's Law of Nature, Grotius on the Laws of Peace and War, Bodin on Government, Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws, Blackstone's Commentaries, and Jeremy Taylor's Ductor Dubitantium. I had read works on Anatomy, Physiology and Medicine, when I could get hold of them, from the time when I was only twelve years old. I never went far into any other sciences, yet I studied, to some extent, Astronomy, Geology, Physical Geography, Botany, Natural History, and Anthropology. I read Wesley's publication on Natural Philosophy, and I gave more or less attention to every work on science and natural philosophy that came in my way. Works on natural religion and natural theology, in which science was taught and used in subservience to Christian truth and duty, I read whenever I could get hold of them. They interested me exceedingly. For works on Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, I had not

Hosted by Google

the least regard. They seemed to have no tendency to help me in the work in which I was engaged, and I had no desire to talk respectable nonsense on such subjects. I was fond of Ecclesiastical and Civil History, and read most greedily such works as threw light on the progress of society in learning, science, and useful arts; in freedom, morals, religion and government. I read many of the works of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and the history of the wonderful periods in which they flourished. I was especially fond of Cicero, Seneca, and Epictetus. All subjects bearing on the great interests of mankind, and all works revealing the workings of the human mind and the laws of human nature, seemed to me to bear important relations to religion and the Bible; and the writings of the great philosophers, lawyers, and historians, appeared to be almost as much in my line as Baxter's Christian Directory, or Wesley's Notes on the New Testament.

Tales of wars and intrigues, and of royal and aristocratic vices and follies I hated. Yet I was interested in accounts of religious controversies, and read with eagerness, though with pain and horror, the tragic and soul-harrowing stories of the deadly conflicts between Christian piety and anti-Christian intolerance. Above all I loved well-written books on the beneficial influence of Christianity on the temporal interests and the general happiness of mankind. I liked good biographies, especially of celebrated students, great philosophers, and remarkable Christian philanthropists. Of works of fiction I read very few, and evermore still fewer as I got older, until at length I came to view them generally as a great nuisance. There are few, I suppose, that can say they read the whole, not only of Wesley's works, but of his Christian Library, in fifty volumes; yet I went through the whole, though one of the books was so profound, or else so silly, that I could not find one sentence in it that I could properly understand. I read the greater part of the books of my friends. I went through nearly the whole library of a village about two miles distant from my native place. My native place itself could not boast a library in those days. I read scores, if not hundreds of books that taught me nothing but the ignorance and self-conceit of the writers, and the various forms of literary and religious insanity to which poor weak humanity is liable.

Hosted by Google

There was a large old Free Library at Newcastle-on-Tyne, left to the city by a celebrated clergyman, which contained all the Fathers, all the Greek and Roman Classics, all the more celebrated of the old Infidels, all the old leading skeptical and lawless writers of Italy, and France, and Holland, all the great old Church of England writers, and all the leading writers of the Nonconformists, Dissenters, and Heretics of all kinds. To this library I used to go, day after day, and stay from morning to night, reading some of the great authors through, and examining almost all of them sufficiently to enable me to see what there was in each, that I had not met with in the rest. Here I read Hobbes and Machiavel, Bolingbroke and Shaftesbury, Tindal and Chubb. Here I first saw the works of Cudworth and Chillingworth, and here too I first found the entire works of Bacon and Newton, of Locke and Boyle. Here also I read the works of some of the older defenders of the faith. Grotius on the truth of the Christian religion I had read much earlier. I had used it as a school book, translating it both out of Latin into English, and out of English back into Latin, imprinting it thereby almost word for word upon my memory. I had also read the work of his commentator on the causes of incredulity. Leland on the deistical writers, and Paley's Evidences, and others, I read after. But in this great old library I met with numbers of interesting and important works that I have never met with since. And here, in the dimly lighted antiquated rooms, I used to fill my mind with a world of facts, and thoughts, and fancies, and then go away to meditate upon them while travelling on my way, or sitting in my room, or lying on my bed. Day and night, alone and in company, these were the things which filled my mind and exercised my thoughts.

And having a rather retentive memory, and considerable powers of imagination, I was able at times to bring almost all the things of importance which I had met with in my reading, before my mind, and compare them both with each other, and with all that was already in my memory. And whatever appeared to me most rational, most scriptural, I treasured for future use, allowing the rest to drift away into forgetfulness.

Hosted by Google

No one can imagine the happiness I found in this my search after truth, except those who have experienced the like. I seemed at times to live in a region of the highest and divinest bliss. Every fresh discovery of truth, every detection of old error, every enlargement of my views, brought unspeakable rapture; and had it not been for the narrow-mindedness of some of my friends, the restraints of established creeds, and the thought of the trials which my mental revels might some day bring on me and my family, my life would have been a heaven on earth.

Perhaps I read too much, or too greedily and variously. Would it not in any case have been better for me to have refrained from reading the writings of such a host of heretics, infidels, and mere natural philosophers? It is certain that what I attempted was too much for my powers, and too vast for one man's life. But I was not sufficiently conscious of the infinitude of truth, or of the narrow limits of my powers, or of the infinite mysteries of which humanity and the universe are full. And my desire for knowledge was infinite, and my appetite was very keen, and I was so desirous to be right on every subject bearing on the religion of Christ, and on the great interests of mankind, that nothing that I could do seemed too much if it seemed likely to help me in the attainment of my object.

Then I had no considerate and enlightened guide; no friend, no colleague, with a father's heart, to direct me in my studies or my choice of books. There was one minister in the Body to which I belonged that might have given me good counsel, if he had been at hand, but he and I were never stationed in the same neighborhood. And he had suffered so much on account of his superior intelligence and liberal tendencies, that he might have felt unwilling to advise me freely. The preachers generally could not understand me, and they had no sympathy with my eager longings for religious knowledge. They could not comprehend what in the world I could want beyond their own old stereotyped notions and phrases, and the comfortable provision made for the supply of my temporal wants. Why could I not check my thinking, enjoy my popularity, and rejoice in the success of my labors? And when I could not take their flippant counsels, they had nothing left but

Hosted by Google

hints at unpleasant consequences. There was nothing for me therefore, but to follow the promptings of my own insatiate soul, and travel on alone in the fear of God, hoping that things would get better, and my prospects grow brighter by and by.

So I moved on in my own track, still digging for truth as for silver, and searching for it as for hidden treasure. And I worked unceasingly, and with all my might. I lost no time. I hated pleasure parties, and all kinds of amusements. My work was my amusement. I hated company, unless the subject of conversation could be religion, or something pertaining to it. When obliged to go out and take dinner, or tea, or supper, I always took a book or two with me, and if the company were not inclined to spend the time in useful conversation, I would slip away into some quiet room, or take a walk, and spend my time in reading. I always read on my walks and on my journeys, if the weather was fair, and on some occasions when it was not fair. My mind was always on the stretch. I had no idea that I needed rest or recreation. It never entered into my mind that I could get to the end of my mental strength, and when I was actually exhausted,—when I had wearied both body and mind to the utmost, so that writing and even reading became irksome to me, I still accused myself of idleness, instead of suspecting myself of weariness. I wonder that I lived. If my constitution had not been sound and elastic to the last degree, I should have worn myself out, and been silent in the dust, more than thirty years ago.

7. All the time that I was laboring to correct and enlarge my views of Christian truth and duty, I was endeavoring to improve my way of speaking and writing. I wished, of course, to be able to speak and write correctly and forcibly, but what I longed for most of all, was to be able to speak with the greatest possible plainness and simplicity to the poorer and less favored classes. If there were things in Christianity that were inexplicable mysteries, I had no wish to meddle with them at all; if there was nothing but what was explicable, I wished to be able to speak in such a manner as to make the whole subject of religion plain to them. My belief was that there were *not* any inexplica-

Hosted by Google

ble mysteries in Christianity; that though there were doctrines in Christianity which had been mysteries in earlier times, they were mysteries now no longer, but revelations; that the things which were inexplicable mysteries, belonged to God, and that none but things that were revealed belonged to us. My impression was, that all things spiritual could be made as plain to people of common sense and honest hearts, as things natural; that all that was necessary to this end, was first to separate from Christianity all that was *not* Christianity, and secondly, to translate Christianity out of Latin and Greek, Hebrew and Gibberish, into the language of the common people.

To qualify myself for this work of translation was the next great object of all my studies. Paul regarded the unnecessary use of unknown tongues in the assemblies of the Church, as a great nuisance. He demanded that everything said in those assemblies, should be spoken in a language that all could understand. Whether men prayed, or sang, or preached, he insisted that they should do it in such a manner as to make themselves intelligible. His remarks on this subject are the perfection of wisdom, and deserve more attention from religious teachers than they are accustomed to receive. Paul's wish was, that Christians should not only all speak the same things, but that they should speak them in the same way, so that they might all be able to understand each other, and that outsiders might be able to understand them all. "Above all gifts," says he, "covet the gift of plain and intelligible speaking. Never use an unknown tongue so long as you can use a known one. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men but unto God: for no man understandeth him. He may talk about very good things, but no one is the better for his talk. But he that speaketh in a known tongue can be understood by all; and all are instructed, and comforted, and strengthened. And even God can understand a known tongue as well as an unknown one. He that speaketh in an unknown tongue may edify himself perhaps; but he that speaketh in a known one, edifieth the Church. I do not grudge you your unknown tongues, but I had a great deal rather you would use a known one; for greater is he that speaketh in a known

Hosted by Google

one, than he that speaketh in an unknown one. True greatness does not consist in saying or doing things wonderful; but in saying and doing things useful,—in talking and acting in a loving, condescending, self-sacrificing spirit, with a view to the comfort and welfare of our brethren. Suppose I were to come to you speaking in tongues that you did not understand, what good should I do you, unless I should translate what I said into a tongue you could understand? And why should I say a thing twice over when saying it once would do as well, and even better? Everything should be made as plain as possible from the first. When you have made things as plain as you can, there will be some that will find it as much as they can do to catch your meaning. If you talk in an unknown tongue they cannot get at your meaning at all, but only sit, and stare, and sigh. Some poor silly souls may admire and applaud you; for there are always some who, when they hear a man that they cannot understand, will cry out, What a great preacher! But what good or sensible man would wish for the praise of such creatures as those? Talk intelligibly. Talk so that folks can tell what you are talking about. If you have nothing worth saying, hold your tongues. If you *have* something worth saying, say it so that people can understand it. Make everything as clear as possible. We might as well be without tongues as talk unintelligibly. Even things without life, giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, no one knows how many voices in the world; and none of them without signification. The voices of birds and the voices of beasts are endless in variety; yet each has its own distinct intelligible meaning. All creatures, though destitute of language like that of man, make themselves properly understood by their mates, their kindred, and their associates. They even make themselves intelligible to men. Talk of great preachers;—why the man that cannot or will not preach so as to make himself understood, is

Hosted by Google

smaller, lower, less in the esteem of God, and of good, sensible, Christian men and women, than the lowest animal, or the smallest insect, on the face of the earth. Every sheep that bleats, every ox that lows, every ass that brays, every bird that sings, and every goose that gabbles, is more of a sage, if not more of a saint, than the great preachers! The things so-called by a certain class of simpletons, are about the most pitiable, if not the most blameable creatures, in all God's universe. What then is the upshot of what I am saying? It is this. Whether I sing, or pray, or talk, I will make myself understood. I thank my God, I can speak with tongues more than you all; and I *do* speak with them when it is necessary to do so in order to make myself understood: but in the Church, I had rather speak five words in a tongue and a style that my hearers can understand, that by my voice I may teach others, than ten thousand in an unknown tongue."

And so the great, good, common-sense Apostle goes on.

My wish and purpose were to carry out his principles to the farthest possible extent. If I had tried hard, I could have preached in Latin. With a little more effort I could have preached in Greek. I could have preached in the ordinary, high-sounding, Frenchified, Latinized, mongrel style, without an effort. It required an effort to keep clear of the abomination. And I made the effort. I wanted to feel when speaking, that I had not only myself a proper understanding of what I was talking about, but that I was conveying correct and clear ideas of it to the minds of my hearers. To utter words which I did not understand, or words which I could not make my hearers understand, was a thing I could not endure; and to this day, the very idea of such a thing excites in me a kind of horror. I had no ambition to preach what were called great sermons, or to be what was called a great preacher. My great desire was not to astonish or confound people, but to do them good; to convey religious truth to their minds in such a way, and so to impress it on their hearts, that they might be converted, edified, and saved.

When I first began to preach I had a cousin who was commencing his career as a minister at the same time. *He* was ambitious to shine, and to astonish his hearers by a

Hosted by Google

show of learning. He knew nothing of Latin and Greek, but he was fond of great high-sounding words of Greek and Latin origin. He carried about with him a pocket dictionary, which he used for the purpose of turning little words into big ones, and common ones into strange ones. My taste was just the contrary. My desire was to be as simple as possible. Like my companion, I often carried about with me a pocket dictionary, but the end for which *I* used it was, to help me to turn big words into little ones, and strange and hard ones into common and easy ones. And whenever I had to consult a dictionary in translating Latin, or Greek, or any other language, into English, I always took the simplest and best known words I could find to give the meaning of the original. My cousin's desire to shine betrayed him at times into very ridiculous blunders. I once heard him say, after having spent some time in explaining his text, 'But that I may *devil-hope* the subject a little more fully, I would observe, that the words are *mephitical*." He, of course, meant to say, *metaphorical*, figurative, not *mephitical*, which means of a *bad smell*. My plan secured me against such mistakes.

To assist me in gaining a knowledge of the true meaning, and of the right use of words, and to correct and simplify my style as much as possible, I read whatever came in my way on grammar and philology, on rhetoric and logic. I also collected a number of the best English dictionaries, including a beautiful copy of Johnson's great work in two thick quarto volumes. I read and studied the works of nearly all our great poets, from Spenser and Shakespeare, down to Cowper and Burns. I read two or three later ones. I had already committed to memory the whole, or nearly the whole, of the moral songs of Dr. Watts; and many of them keep their places in my memory to the present day. And though it may seem incredible to some, I actually committed to memory every hymn in the Wesleyan Hymn Book. I never knew them all off at one time, but I got them all off in succession. And I never forgot the better, truer, simpler, sweeter ones. I can repeat hundreds of them still, with the exception of here and there a stanza or two. And I committed to memory all the better portion of the new hymns introduced into the

Hosted by Google

hymn book by the Methodist New Connection. And I committed to memory choice pieces of poetry without number. I read Shakespeare till I could quote many of his best passages, including nearly all his soliloquies, and a number of long conversations, as readily as I could quote the sacred writings.

I read all Bunyan's works. I could tell the story of his Pilgrim from beginning to end. I read Robinson Crusoe, and some of the other works of Defoe. I read Addison and Johnson, Goldsmith and Swift. To get at the origin and at the primitive meaning of words, I studied French and German, as well as Latin and Greek. When I met with passages in English authors that expressed great truths in a style that was not to my taste, I used to translate them into my own style, just as I did fine passages from Latin, Greek, or French authors. I also translated poetical passages into prose. I tried sometimes to translate things into the language of children, and in some cases I succeeded. I did my best to keep in mind how I felt, and what I could understand, when I was a child and a boy, and endeavored to keep my style as near as I could to the level of my boyish understanding. My first superintendent did not approve of my plan. "The proper way," said he, "is, not to go down to the people; but to compel the people to come up to you." He was fond of a swelling, high-sounding, long-winded style. How far he succeeded in bringing people up to himself, I cannot say, but I recollect once hearing a pupil of his talk a whole hour without uttering either a thought or a feeling that was worth a straw. An old woman, with whom he had once lived, and with whom he was a great favorite, said to me after the service, 'Well, how did you like our young man?' 'He talked away,' said I. 'I think he did,' she answered, 'he grows better and better. *I* couldn't understand him.' His teacher, my superintendent, published a volume of sermons; but I never met with anybody that had read them. I read one or two of them myself, and was astonished;—perhaps not so much astonished as something else,—to find, that at the end of one of his tall-worded, long-winded, round-about sentences, he contradicted what he had said at the beginning.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER V.

CHANGES IN THE AUTHOR'S VIEWS.

MY studies led me to make considerable changes both in my views and way of speaking.

1. With regard to my views. I found that some of the doctrines which I had been taught as Christian doctrines, were not so much as hinted at by Christ and His Apostles,—that some doctrines which Christ and His Apostles taught with great plainness, I never had been taught at all; and that some of the doctrines of Christ and His Apostles which I had been taught, I had been taught in very different forms from those in which they were presented in the New Testament.

I found that some doctrines which I had been taught as doctrines of the greatest importance, were never so much as alluded to in the whole Bible, while in numbers of places quite contrary doctrines were taught. While unscriptural doctrines were inculcated as fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, some of the fundamental doctrines themselves were not only neglected, but denounced as grievous heresies.

Many passages of Scripture which were perfectly plain when left to speak out their own meaning, had been used so badly by theologians, that they had become unintelligible to ordinary Christians. While professing to give the passages needful explanations, they had heaped upon them impenetrable obscurations. Words that, as they came from Jesus, were spirit and life, had been so grievously perverted, that they had become meaningless or mischievous.

I met with passages which had been used as proofs of doctrines to which they had not the slightest reference. There were the words of Jeremiah for instance: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" The prophet is speaking of the impossibility of men, after long continuance in wilful sin, breaking off their bad habits; as the closing words of the passage show: "Then may ye who are *accustomed* to do evil, do well." But the theologians took the words and used them in support of the doc-

Hosted by Google

trine that no man in his unconverted state can do anything towards his salvation,—a doctrine which is neither Scriptural nor rational. Again; Isaiah, referring to the calamitous condition of the Jewish nation, in consequence of God's judgments, says: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot to the head, there is no soundness; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores," &c. This, which the prophet said with regard to the *state* of the *Jews*, the theologians applied to the *character*, not of the Jews only, but of *all mankind*. What Paul said about the law of Moses, and the works or deeds required by that law, the theologians applied to the law of Christ. And so with regard to multitudes of passages. I was constantly coming across passages that the theologians systematically perverted, taking them from their proper use and meaning, and forcing them into the support of notions to which they had not the slightest reference. The liberties taken with the words of Paul went far towards turning the writings of that great advocate and example of holiness into lessons of licentiousness.

It was plain that, on many points, theology was one thing, and Christianity another; and that many and important changes would have to be made in the creeds and confessions of Christendom, before they could be brought into harmony with the truth as taught by Jesus.

Some theological doctrines I found rested on the authority of Milton's Paradise Lost, or of the Church of England Prayer Book, or on the authority of earlier works from which Milton or the authors of the Prayer Book had borrowed.

One day, about forty-two years ago, I was travelling homewards from Shields to Blyth on foot, when a man with a cart overtook me, and asked me to get in and ride. I did so. The man and I were soon busy discussing theology. We talked on saving faith, imputed righteousness, predestination, divine foreknowledge, election, reprobation and redemption. We differed on every point, and the man got very warm. He then spake of a covenant made between God the Father and His Son before the creation of the world, giving me all the particulars of the engagement. I told him I had read something about a covenant of that

Hosted by Google

kind in Milton's Paradise Lost, but that I had never met with anything on the subject in the sacred writings, and added that I doubted whether any such transaction ever took place. He got more excited than ever, and expressed some uneasiness at having such a blasphemous heretic in his cart. Just then one of the cart wheels came off and down went the vehicle on one side, spilling me and the driver on the road. I was quickly on my feet, but he lay on his back sprawling in the sand. "That's a judgment," said he, "on your blasphemies." "You seem to have got the worst part of the judgment," said I. I asked him if I could help him. He seemed to hint that I ought to pay for the damage done to the cart; but as that was not in the covenant, I did not take the hint; and as he was in a somewhat unamiable temper, I left him to himself, and trudged on homeward. The carter and I had no more discussions on covenants. But many a bit of theology has been built on Milton since then.

Other doctrines I found to be new versions of old pagan imaginations.

Some seemed to have originated in the selfish and sensual principles of human nature, which make men wishful to avoid self-denial and a life of beneficence, and to find some easy way to heaven.

In some cases Protestants had run into extremes through a hatred and horror of Popery, while in others orthodox teachers had run into extremes through hatred and dread of Socinianism.

In other cases doctrines seemed to have been rested on no authority but the facts, or supposed facts, of individual experiences.

Some great doctrines were rendered incomprehensible, repulsive, or incredible, in consequence of not being accompanied with other doctrines, which were necessary to explain their use, and make manifest their reasonableness and worth. There was no lack of attention among theologians to the doctrine that Christ was an incarnation of the Deity; but little or no regard was paid to the kindred doctrine, its necessary accompaniment, that Jesus was the 'image,' the 'likeness,' of God, the revelation or manifestation of His character. Yet this is essential to a right un-

Hosted by Google

derstanding and a due appreciation of the other. The revelation or manifestation of God, and especially of His eternal and infinite love, was the great design and end of the incarnation. Taken apart from this doctrine the incarnation becomes a dry hard fact, without use or meaning. It is when viewed as a means of revealing God,—of making manifest His infinite goodness, and by that means melting and purifying man's heart, and transforming his character, that it is seen to be full of interest and power and glory.

The doctrine that Jesus is God's image, God manifest in the flesh, is the one great doctrine of Christianity,—the sum, the substance of the whole Gospel,—the Gospel itself, —the power of God to the salvation of every one that truly believes and contemplates it. It is a world of truth in one,—a whole encyclopædia of divine philosophy; the perfection of all wisdom and of all power; the one great revelation needful to the salvation of the world.

Yet I never met with this doctrine for the first thirty years of my life, in any theological work. I have no recollection that I ever heard it mentioned in a sermon. I certainly never heard it explained and applied to the great purposes for which it was designed. I never was told that to know the character of God, I had only to look at the character of Christ,—that what Christ was during His life on earth in the circle in which He moved, that God was throughout all worlds, and towards all the creatures of His hands,—that the love which led Jesus to suffer and die for the salvation of the world, lived and moved in the heart of the infinite, invisible God, prompting Him to plan and labor throughout immensity to promote the happiness of the whole creation. In short, the Gospel was never preached to me in its simplicity and beauty, in its glory and power, nor was it ever properly explained to me in catechism, creed, confession, or body of divinity.

And generally, no sufficient stress was ever laid by theologians on the value and necessity of personal virtue,—of religious and moral goodness. It was believed that Christians would *have* goodness of some kind, in some degree,— that they would be, on the whole, in some respects, better than the ungodly world; and there was a feeling that they *ought* to be so: but it was rare to meet with a preacher or

Hosted by Google

a book that put the subject in any thing like a Scriptural Christian light. No one contended that goodness was everything, that it was the one great all-glorious object for which the world was made, for which the universe was upheld, for which prophets spake, for which the Scriptures were written, for which God became incarnate, for which Jesus lived and labored, for which He suffered and died, for which He founded His Church and appointed and endowed its ministers, for which Providence planned, and for which all things continued to exist. No one taught that goodness was the only thing for which God cared, the only thing which He esteemed and loved, and the only thing He would reward and bless. Books and preachers did not use to tell us, that faith, and knowledge, and feeling,—that repentance, conversion, and sanctification,—that reading the Scriptures, and hearing sermons, and singing hymns, and offering prayers,—that church fellowship, and religious ordinances, were all nothing except so far as they tended to make people good, and then to make them better, and at last to perfect them in all divine and human excellence. No one taught us that goodness was beauty, that goodness was greatness, that goodness was glory, that goodness was happiness, that goodness was heaven. The truth was never pressed on us that the want of goodness was deformity, dishonor and shame,—that it was pain, and wretchedness, and torment, and death,—that goodness in full measure would make earth heaven—that its decline and disappearance would make earth hell. Yet a careful and long-continued perusal of the Scriptures left the impression on my mind, that this was really the case. When I compared the eternal talk about all our goodness being of no account in the sight of God,—of all our righteousness being but as filthy rags,—with the teachings of Scripture, I felt as if theologians were anti-christ, and their theology the gospel of the wicked one. I have no wish to do injustice to theology, or to theologians either; but the more I knew of them, the less I thought of them. And even when the Christian and theologian got blended, as they did, to some extent, in such men as Baxter and Wesley, I pitied the theologian while I esteemed and loved the Christian. Theological works are poor contemptible things. It would

Hosted by Google

have been no great loss to the world if nineteen-twentieths of them had been burnt in the Chicago fire.

I was often grievously harassed with prevailing theories of Scripture inspiration. All those theories seemed inconsistent with facts,—inconsistent with what every man of any information, knew to be true in reference to the Scriptures. They all lay open to infidel objections,—unanswerable objections. They made it impossible for a man to argue with the abler and better informed class of infidel assailants with the success and satisfaction desirable. The theories did not *admit* of a successful defence. And when the theories were refuted, the Bible and Christianity suffered. On searching the Scriptures I found they gave no countenance to those theories. They taught the *doctrine* of Scripture inspiration, but not the prevailing *theories* of the doctrine. The doctrine I could defend with ease: the defence of the theories was impossible. I accordingly laid aside the theories.

Again; I heard and read continually about the influence and work of the Holy Spirit; but I seldom heard and read of the influence of the truth. Yet in Scripture we read as much and as often of the latter as of the former.

I had been led, in some way, to believe that Adam was the federal head of all mankind,—that God made a covenant with him that was binding on all his posterity,—that the destinies of the whole human race were placed in his hands,—that it was so arranged that if Adam did right, his posterity were to be born in a state of perfection and blessedness, incapable of sin and misery,—that if he did wrong they were to be born depraved and miserable, under the curse of God, and liable to death and damnation—that as Adam did do wrong, we all came into the world so depraved that we were incapable of thinking a good thought, of feeling a good desire, of speaking a right word, or of doing a right thing,—that Jesus came into the world to redeem us from the guilt of Adam's sin, and from the punishment due to us for that sin, and to put us on such a footing with regard to God as to render possible our salvation. I had been led to believe a hundred other things connected with these about the plan of redemption, the way of salvation, imputed righteousness, saving faith, &c. When

Hosted by Google

I came to look for those doctrines in the Bible, I could not find one of them from the beginning of the Book to the end. I was in consequence led to regard them as the imaginations of unthinking, trifling, or dreamy theologians.

There are few doctrines more generally received than the doctrine of types,—the doctrine that persons and things under the older dispensations were intended to direct the minds of those who saw them to things corresponding to them under the Christian dispensation. In McEwen's work on Types, which appears to have had an immense circulation, is this sentence,—'That the grand doctrines of Christianity concerning the mediation of Christ, &c., were typically *manifested* to the church by a variety of ceremonies, persons and events, under the Old Testament dispensation, is past doubt.' And it is very plainly intimated, that those who affect to call this notion in question, and yet pretend to be friends of a divine revelation, are hypocrites. It is added: 'The sacrifices were ordained to pre-figure Christ,—and were professions of faith in His propitiation.'

There are but few preachers or religious books which do not go on the supposition that this doctrine is taught in Scripture. And you may hear sermon after sermon from some preachers, the chief object of which is to point out correspondences between the paschal lamb, the scape-goat, and other sacrifices under the Law, and Jesus and the sacrifice which He offered. Some preachers and religious writers take almost all things under the law to be types of Christ, or types of things pertaining to Him. They make Noah, and Isaac, and Melchisedec, and Joseph, and Moses, and Joshua, and David, and Samson, and Solomon, and the brazen serpent, and the rod of Aaron, and the manna, types of Christ, and almost all the sacrifices they make types of His great sacrifice of Himself.

I could see no warrant for this doctrine. I could find no proof that any of the sacrifices under the law were intended to direct the minds of those who offered them to the sacrifice of Jesus. There is nothing in the law, and there is nothing in the prophets to that effect. There is no passage of Scripture which says that any one ever *did* look through the old Levitical sacrifices to Christ. There is no passage which says it was men's duty to do so; none which com-

Hosted by Google

mends any one for doing so, or which blames any one for not doing so. The prophets often rebuke the Israelites for their injustice, intemperance, deceit and cruelty, but they never rebuke them for not looking through their sacrifices to the sacrifice of Jesus. They often exhort people to 'cease to do evil and learn to do well;' but they never urge them to regard their sacrifices as types or manifestations of the sacrifice of Christ. Christ nowhere teaches the ordinary doctrine of types. He never refers to anything as a type of His sacrifice, or of anything else connected with His work. Nor do the Apostles say anything to countenance the prevailing notion. For anything the Scriptures say to the contrary, the whole doctrine of types, as set forth in such books as that of McEwen, is a human fiction. Indeed, I see no hint in Scripture that any one had the least idea that the Messiah would offer Himself a sacrifice for sin till after the sacrifice had taken place. Isaiah and Daniel spake on the subject, and 'They inquired and searched diligently,' says Peter, 'what, or what manner of time the spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow; unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven.' And we know that Christ's own disciples did not believe that Christ would die at all. So far were they from having any thought of such a thing, that when Jesus told them, in the plainest words imaginable, they did not understand Him. The fact had to reveal itself. And even now the nature and end of Christ's sacrifice are but very imperfectly understood.

And if the doctrine of types falls to the ground, some other doctrines, which rest upon it, must go down. Certain notions about the faith of the ancient saints must give way, and the views of saving faith presented in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews must take their place.

Great numbers of religious teachers and writers attribute to Adam and Eve, in their first state, an amount of knowledge, and a perfection of righteousness, which the Scriptures nowhere ascribe to them, and which, if they had

Hosted by Google

possessed them, would have rendered it impossible, one would think, that they should have yielded so readily to temptation.

They represent the first sin as having effects which are never attributed to it in the Bible.

They give an unwarrantable meaning to the word death contained in the first threatening.

They attribute to man's first sin inconveniences of the seasons, and of the different climates of the globe, as well as a thousand things on the earth's surface, and in the dispositions and habits of the lower animals, which are not attributed to that cause by the sacred writers.

They spend a vast amount of time and words in trying to prove that the reason why Abel's sacrifice was more excellent than that of Cain, and was accepted by God, was that Abel offered animals, and had an eye to the sacrifice of Christ, while Cain offered only the fruits of the ground, that did not typify or symbolize that sacrifice; a notion for which there is no authority in Scripture. The story in Genesis seems to intimate that the sacrifice of Cain was rejected because he was a bad-living man, and that the sacrifice of Abel was accepted because he was a good-living man. Hence the words of God in His address to Cain, 'Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.' And hence too the statement of John, that Cain slew his brother because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous. And the faith attributed to Abel, as well as to Enoch, Moses and others, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is not faith in the sacrifice of Christ, but simply a belief in God; a belief that 'He *is*, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, or lovingly serve Him.'

There were many definitions and descriptions of saving faith common in religious books for which I could find no authority in Scripture.

I also met with a multitude of cold hard things about the Trinity and the Atonement in works on Theology which I never was unhappy enough to find in the Bible. All seemed pleasant and natural and of heavenly tendency there. I read books which seemed to require me to be-

Hosted by Google

lieve in three Gods; but I met with nothing of the kind in Scripture. I heard prayers and forms of benediction worded in a way altogether different from the prayers and benedictions found in the Bible. The Scriptures allowed me to think of God, in the first place, as one, as I myself was one. They did not tell me He was three in the same way as I was three; but they left the doctrine of the Trinity in such a state or shape that I found no more difficulty in receiving it, than I found in receiving the fact of a Trinity in myself. I left accordingly the hard repulsive representations of the theologians to their fate, and accepted and contented myself with the living, rational and practical representations of Scripture in their stead.

The work of Christ was generally represented by theologians as exerting its influence directly on God. His death was generally spoken of as a satisfaction to divine justice, or as an expedient for harmonizing the divine attributes, or maintaining the principles of the divine government. God was represented as being placed in a difficulty,—as being unable to gratify His love in forgiving men on their repenting and turning to Him, without violating His justice and His truth, and putting in peril the principles of His government. There were several other theological theories of the design or object of the death of Christ. All these theories may be true in a certain sense. They may, perhaps, be so explained as to make them harmonize with the teachings of Scripture. But I found none of them in the Bible. I found multitudes of passages which represented the death and sufferings of Christ as intended to influence men, but not one that taught any of the theological theories,—hardly one that even seemed to do so. Here again I took the Scripture representations, and allowed the theological ones to slide.

There was a hymn which said of Christ, 'Our debt He has paid, and our work He has done.' I could find nothing in Scripture about the Saviour paying our debt, or doing our work. I could find passages which taught that our debts or sins might be *forgiven*, on our return to God. So far were the Scriptures from teaching that Christ had done our work, that they represented Him as coming into the world to fit us to do it ourselves,—as redeeming us and creating us anew that we might be zealous of good works.

Hosted by Google

I could find nothing in Scripture to countenance the common notion about the efficacy of the death-bed repentances of old, wilful, hardened sinners. The Bible left on my mind the impression that 'whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.'

Some preachers and writers spoke as if God the Father was sterner, less tender and loving, than the Son. But as we have seen, the Bible taught that Jesus was God's image, His likeness, the incarnation and revelation of God,—God manifest in the flesh.

I read in books, and heard it said in sermons, that God did not answer men's prayers, or grant them any blessing, or receive them at last to heaven, on account of anything good in themselves, or of anything good they did. Yet on looking through the Scriptures I found such passages as these: 'Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.' In the parable of the talents I found God represented as saying, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.' And in the Prophet I read, 'Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.' I found the whole Bible going on the same principle. God loves what is good for its own sake. It would be strange if He did not. And how any one can think He is honoring God by teaching the contrary we cannot understand.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN WESLEY AND HIS VIEWS ON CERTAIN POINTS.

HOW easy it is for men to mix up their own fancies, or the vain conceits of others, with divine truth,—or rather, how hard it is to *avoid* doing so,—we may see by the case of John Wesley. Wesley was one of the most devout, and conscientious, and, on the whole, one of the most rational, Scriptural, practical and common-sense men the Christian Church ever had. Compared with theologians generally, he was worthy of the highest praise. He had the greatest reverence for the Scriptures. He early in life declared it to be his determination to be *a man of one Book*, and that one book the BIBLE; and he acted in accordance with this determination to the best of his knowledge and ability. The Bible was his sole authority. Its testimony decided all questions, settled all controversies. Yet such was the influence of prevailing custom in the theological world, operating on his mind unconsciously from his earliest days, that he unintentionally acted inconsistently with this good resolution in cases without number. Shakespeare makes one of his characters say, "If to do, were as easy as to know what is fittest to be done, beggars would ride on horses, and poor men's cottages would be princes' palaces. I could more easily tell twenty men what it was best to do, than be one of the twenty to carry out my own instructions." And we need no better proof or illustration of the truth of this wise saying, than the case of the good and great John Wesley.

We have seen what his resolution was. Look now at one or two of his sermons. Take first the sermon on God's Approbation of His Works. In that discourse, referring to the primeval earth, he speaks as follows: "The *whole surface* of it was beautiful in a high degree. The *universal face* was clothed with living green. And every part was *fertile* as well as beautiful. It was no where deformed by rough or ragged rocks: it did not shock the view with horrid precipices, huge chasms, or dreary caverns: with deep,

Hosted by Google

impassable morasses, or deserts of barren sands. We have not any authority to say, with some learned and ingenious authors, that there were no *mountains* on the original earth, no unevennesses on its surface, yet it is highly probable that they rose and fell, by almost insensible degrees.

"There were no agitations within the bowels of the globe: no violent convulsions: no concussions of the earth: no earthquakes: but all was unmoved as the pillars of heaven. There were then no such things as eruptions of fire: there were no volcanoes, or burning mountains. Neither Vesuvius, Etna, nor Hecla, if they had any being, then poured out smoke and flame, but were covered with a verdant mantle, from the top to the bottom.

"It is probable there was no external sea in the paradisiacal earth: none, until the great deep burst the barriers which were originally appointed for it; indeed there was not then that need of the ocean for *navigation* which there is now. For either every country produced whatever was requisite either for the necessity or comfort of its inhabitants; or man being then (as he will be again at the resurrection) equal to the angels, was able to convey himself, at his pleasure, to any given distance.

"There were no putrid lakes, no turbid or stagnating waters. The element of *air* was then always serene, and always friendly to man. It contained no frightful meteors, no unwholesome vapors, no poisonous exhalations. There were no tempests, but only cool and gentle breezes, fanning both man and beast, and wafting the fragrant odors on their silent wings.

"The sun, the fountain of *fire*, 'Of this great world both eye and soul,' was situated at the most exact distance from the earth, so as to yield a sufficient quantity of heat, (neither too little nor too much) to *every part of it*. God had not yet 'Bid his angels turn askance this oblique globe.' There was, therefore, then no country that groaned under 'The rage of Arctos, and eternal frost.' There was no violent winter, or sultry summer; no extreme either of heat or cold. No soil was burned up by the solar heat: none uninhabitable through the want of it.

"There were then no impetuous currents of air, no tempestuous winds, no furious hail, no torrents of rain, no

Hosted by Google

rolling thunders or forky lightnings. *One perennial spring was perpetually smiling over the whole surface of the earth.*"

Speaking of vegetable productions, he says,

"There were no weeds, no plants that encumbered the ground. Much less were there any *poisonous* ones, tending to hurt any one creature."

Referring to the living creatures of the sea, he says,

"None of these then attempted to devour, or in any wise hurt one another. All were peaceful and quiet, as were the watery fields wherein they ranged at pleasure."

Referring to insects, he adds,

"The spider was then as harmless as the fly, and did not then lie in wait for blood. The weakest of them crept securely over the earth, or spread their gilded wings in the air, that wavered in the breeze and glittered in the sun, without any to make them afraid. Meantime, the reptiles of every kind were equally harmless, and more intelligent than they."

Referring to birds and beasts, he says,

"Among all these there were no birds or beasts of prey: none that destroyed or molested another."

All this may be very beautiful poetry, such as one might expect from the "fine frenzy" of a loving, lawless genius, but it is not Scripture, nor is it science or philosophy. We have not a doubt but that God made all things *right*,—that all His works were very *good;* the Scriptures tell us that very plainly: but they do *not* tell us that the things named by Wesley constituted their goodness. *He* thinks that the earth could not be good if it had on its surface rough or rugged rocks, horrid precipices, huge chasms, or dreary caverns, with impassable morasses, or deserts of barren sands. *We* think *otherwise*. *We* think the earth is all the *better*, and even all the more *beautiful* for rough and rugged rocks, for horrid precipices, huge chasms, and dreary caverns. So far from regarding the rough and rugged rocks as deformities, we look on them as ornaments. So far from appearing to us as an evil, they appear a good. Even the impassable morasses, and the deserts of barren sands may have their use. If man had met with nothing in the state of the earth that stood in the way of his will or pleasure; if he had met with nothing in the shape of

Hosted by Google

difficulty or inconvenience, it would have been a terrible calamity. All man's powers are developed and perfected by exertion; and without exertion,—without vigorous exertion—he would not, as at present constituted, be capable of enjoying life. Man cannot be happy without work. We therefore believe that it was wise and kind in God, independent of Adam's sin, to make impassable morasses, and barren deserts, &c., to exercise man's powers of mind and body in *draining* the morasses, and *fertilizing* the deserts. We believe that the earth was very good; but we believe that the rough and rugged rocks, the horrid precipices, huge chasms, dreary caverns, with the deep impassable morasses, and the deserts of barren sands, were *parts* of the earth's goodness,—were manifestations both of the wisdom and goodness of God.

Wesley thinks there *were* mountains on the earth before sin was committed, but that their sides were not *abrupt* or *difficult of ascent;* that they rose and fell by almost *insensible degrees.* This passage also goes on the false supposition, that whatever things would be likely to render great exertion necessary on the part of man, would be an evil; whereas such things are among man's greatest blessings.

Wesley farther tells us, that there were no agitations within the bowels of the earth, no violent convulsions, no concussions of the earth, no earthquakes, no eruptions of fire, no volcanoes, or burning mountains. There is proof however, that there were *all* these things, not only *before sin was committed,* but *before man himself was created.*

Nor do we regard earthquakes and volcanoes as evils. They are calculated even at the present to answer good ends. They tend to make men feel their absolute dependence upon God, and thus lead them to obey His law. They are striking revelations of God's power, and perpetual lessons of piety. And they have other uses.

He says, "If Vesuvius, Etna, or Hecla, existed before sin was committed, they were covered with a verdant mantle from the top to the bottom." But is a mountain either better or more beautiful for being covered with a verdant mantle from the top to the bottom? Is it either better or more beautiful for having no abrupt sides, difficult of ascent,—for rising and falling by almost insensible degrees?

Hosted by Google

We think the contrary. The variety of scenery presented by mountains in their present state, is most beautiful. The abruptness of the sides of mountains contributes infinitely both to the beauty of the mountain, and to the beauty of the earth in general; and the toil of climbing up the steep ascent of a mountain is one of the blessings and pleasures of life. We should be sorry if there were no hills so steep as to be difficult of ascent. We should be sorry if the earth had no mountains with abrupt sides, and black, and brown, and rugged faces. We should be very sorry if the face of the earth were covered with one unvaried mantle of green. Green is very pleasant, and it is well that the greater part of the earth is covered with green; but variety also is pleasant; and green itself would cease to be pleasant if there were nothing else but green.

Wesley adds, that there was probably no sea on the surface of the earth in its paradisiacal state, none until the great deep burst the barriers which were originally appointed for it; and he adds, that there was not then that need of the ocean for navigation which there is now, as every place yielded all that was necessary to man's welfare and pleasure. We answer. The idea that the ocean was given to facilitate communication between different nations, makes us smile. Suppose there had been no ocean, should we have had a long way to go to get into the next country, the country nearest to us? Just the contrary. If there had been no ocean, there would have been land in its place, and we should neither have had to cross water nor land to get to it. It would have come up close to our own country. We have all the same travelling in order to have communication with the inhabitants of other countries when we have crossed the ocean, that we should have had, to obtain communication with neighboring countries, if there had been no ocean at all. The ocean was intended for *other* purposes. The use of the ocean, one of its *principal* uses at least, is to temper the climates and seasons of the earth. If the earth were one unbroken continent, the summers would be intolerably hot, and the winters would be intolerably cold, and the changes from winter to summer would be so violent, and work such fearful havoc, as to render the earth uninhabitable. By means of the *ocean*, those intolerable inconve-

Hosted by Google

niences are avoided. The sea, which is never so cold in winter as the land, tempers the air as it blows over it, and thus moderates the cold of the land. The sea also, which is never so warm in summer as the land, tempers the air again, and breathes coolness and freshness over the heated land. Neither heat nor cold affects the sea so suddenly or so violently as it affects the land. A few days of summer heat are sufficient to make the solid earth quite hot,—so hot, in many cases, that you cannot bear your naked hand upon it long. Yet this same amount of summer heat will make scarcely any perceptible difference in the waters of the ocean. Then again, in winter, a few days severe frost will make the solid earth, and especially the stones and metals, so cold, that they would blister a delicate skin, if pressed against them; while they make scarcely any perceptible difference upon the waters of the ocean. The ocean sits on its low throne like the monarch of this lower world, controlling the elements, tempering the heat and the cold, and thus preserving the earth and its living inhabitants from harm.

Wesley tells us farther, that before the sin of Adam, "The air was always serene and always friendly to man." Now the air is still always *friendly to man.* Even when it comes in the form of hurricanes and tempests, it is so. It is doing work, even then, *good work,* which gentle breezes are *unable* to do. It is carrying away dangers which gentler currents of air would not have the power to carry away. And even when they cause destruction in their course, they are still performing friendly offices to man. They are inspiring him with a livelier consciousness of his absolute dependence upon God, and of the folly of resisting His will. They are exercising his intellectual powers, by leading him to devise means for his protection from their fury, and obliging him also to exert his bodily powers in carrying out the devices of his intellect. They are, in fact, contributing to make him a wiser, a stronger, a better, a happier, and in all respects, a completer, and a diviner being than he otherwise would be. We agree therefore with Wesley that the air before Adam sinned was always *friendly to man;* but we do not agree with him in his notions as to what *constituted* its friendliness; nor do

Hosted by Google

we agree with him in the notion, that since the sin of Adam the air has *ceased* to be friendly, or even proved to be *less* friendly, to man. We believe that the air is as friendly to man now as it ever was,—that it does him as little mischief, that it contributes as much to his well-being and comfort, as it ever did.

Wesley further says, the sun was situated at the most exact distance from the earth, so as to yield a sufficient quantity of heat, neither too little nor too much, to every part of it. He further intimates that there was at first no inclination of the earth's axis, and that the seasons and the degree of heat and cold were, in consequence, the same all the world over, and all the year round. All these statements seem erroneous in the extreme. The supply of heat to the different parts of the earth does not depend altogether on the distance of the sun from the earth, as Wesley intimates, but on the motions of the earth around the sun and upon its own axis. Wesley seems to imagine that if the axis of the earth were not inclined, or elevated at one end, the earth would receive from the sun the same quantity of heat through every part; whereas nothing could be farther from the truth. If, as Wesley expresses it, "This oblique globe had not been turned askance," some parts of the earth would have received from the sun scarcely any heat at all; they would have received neither light nor heat, except in such slight measures as to be altogether useless. The arctic regions and the antarctic regions must have been alike uninhabitable. That turning of the oblique globe askance, which Wesley represents as the cause of extreme heat and cold, was the very thing to *prevent* those extremes, or to reduce them to the lowest possible point, and to secure to every part of the globe, *as far as possible*, an *equal* amount of light and warmth. I say *as far as possible;* for to secure to every part of the earth exactly the same amount of light and heat from one sun, is impossible. Place a little globe in what position you will with respect to a neighboring candle, and fix the axis of that globe as you please, and move that globe; give the globe a motion upon its own axis, and another motion round the light near which it is placed, and you will find it impossible to secure to every part of that globe exactly

Hosted by Google

the same amount of light and heat. By inclining the axis of the globe, or as Wesley expresses it, turning it askance, as the axis of the earth is inclined or turned askance, you may secure the *greatest possible equality* of light and heat to every part; but still that greatest possible equality will be a considerable *inequality*. So far, therefore, from the polar regions being made colder or darker by the globe being turned askance, they are indebted to that very obliqueness of the earth's axis, and that apparent irregularity of its motions, for the chief portion of that light and heat which they receive. How Wesley came to speak so erroneously on this subject, I am at a loss to know, as he must, one would think, have understood the first elements of geography and astronomy. Yet his words are at variance with the first elements of those popular sciences.

But it would take up too much room to notice all the unauthorized statements of Mr. Wesley on this subject. We have said enough to show how the most conscientious and best-intentioned man may err on theological subjects, and what need young Christians have to be somewhat critical and careful in adopting and testing their religious opinions. There are other sermons of Wesley which are as much at variance with Scripture as the one we have had under notice. I have not his sermons at hand just now, but if I remember right, his remarks on the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, in his sermon on that subject, are quite at variance with the statements of Christ.

And Wesley was one of the best, one of the most honest and conscientious, one of the most single-minded men on the face of the earth. No man, I imagine, was ever more anxious to be right,—no one was ever more desirous to know and teach God's truth in all its purity, and in everything to do God's will and bless mankind. And he knew and chose the right standard of truth and goodness, and honestly endeavored to conform to it both in thought and deed and word. Yet he could err in this strange and wholesale way. What then may we expect from other theological writers? Many of the theologians whose writings influence the Church were *not* very good men; they were selfish, ambitious, proud and worldly. Some were idle, dreamy, careless, godless. And others, who were

Hosted by Google

piously disposed, never deliberately adopted the Bible as their rule of faith and practice. They never set themselves to conform to it, as the standard of truth and goodness. They adopted or inherited the faiths or traditions of their predecessors, never suspecting them of error, and never inquiring whether they were true or not. The idea of testing or correcting either their way of thinking or their way of talking on religious subjects, by the teachings of Christ, never entered their minds. They lived at ease, dreaming rather than thinking, and talking in their sleep, and filling great folios with their idle utterances. What kind of thoughts, and what kind of words were we likely to find in the writings of men like these? Robert Hall is reported to have described the works of the celebrated John Owen as "A CONTINENT OF MUD." There are others whose writings might be justly described as volumes of smoke. Mere wind they are not, but foul, black, blinding smoke. And writings of this description are published or republished in great quantities to the present day. And people read them, and fill themselves with wind and filthy fumes, and wrap themselves in smoky, pitchy clouds, and go through the world in a spiritual darkness thick enough to be felt.

This smoke, this blackness and darkness, I could not endure. I was anxious beyond measure to free myself from its bewildering and blinding power, and to get into the clear fresh air, and the bright and cheerful light, of simple Christian truth. And hence the freedom and eagerness of my investigations, and the liberty I took in modifying my belief.

It may be said that many of the doctrines which I have set down as unscriptural, are of little importance; and that is really the case. We ought, therefore, to be the more ready to give them up. Why contend for doctrines of no moment? But some of them *are* important. They are revolting and mischievous errors, and when they are regarded as parts of Christianity, they tend to make men infidels. And in many cases they stagger the faith, and lessen the comfort, and injure the souls of Christians. And even the less important ones do harm when taken to be parts of the religion of Christ. You cannot make thoughtful, sharp-

Hosted by Google

visioned men believe that Jesus came into the world, and lived and died to propagate trifles. Trifles therefore are no longer trifles when set forth as Christian doctrines. And we have enough to believe and think about without occupying our minds with childish fancies. And we have things enough of high importance to preach and write about, without spending our time and strength on idle dreams.

And the apparently harmless fictions prop up the hurtful ones. And they lessen the influence of great truths. And they make religion appear suspicious or contemptible to men of sense. They disgust some. They give occasion to the adversaries to speak reproachfully.

And if you tolerate fictions at all in Christianity, where will you stop? And if you do not stop somewhere, Christianity will disappear, and a mass of worthless and disgusting follies will take its place. The new creation will vanish, and chaos come again.

And again. A large proportion of the controversies of the Church are about men's inventions. Christ's own doctrines do not so often provoke opposition as the traditions of the elders; nor do they, when assailed, require so much defending. They defend themselves. "The devil's way of undoing," says Baxter, "is by overdoing. To bring religious zeal into disrepute, he makes some zealous to madness, to persecution, to blood. To discredit freedom he urges its advocates into lawlessness. To discredit Christian morality, he induces some to carry it to the extreme of asceticism. To discredit needful authority, he makes rulers of the State into despots, and persuades the rulers of the Church to claim infallibility. To discredit Christianity, he adds to it human inventions." Wesley has a similar sentiment. "If you place Christian perfection too high, you drive it out of the world." And it is certain, that an infinite amount of hostility to Christianity is owing to the folly of divines in supplementing its simple and practical doctrines, by speculative and unintelligible theories. "The one great evidence of the divinity of Christianity," says one, "the master-evidence, the evidence with which all other evidences will stand or fall, is Christ Himself speaking by His own word." But

Hosted by Google

if you add to His words foolish fancies, or revolting absurdities, or immoral speculations of your own, you destroy that evidence. You make men infidels.

There are multitudes at the present day to whom you must present religion in an intelligible and rational, and in a grave and commanding light, if you would induce them to give it their serious attention. You can no more interest them in mysteries and nonsense, in speculative and unpractical fictions, than you can change the course of nature. The time for theological trifling is gone by. The time has gone by for any form of religion to make its way which does not consist in solid goodness, or which teaches doctrines, or uses forms, that do not tend to promote solid goodness. If religion is to secure the attention of the world,—if it is to command their respect, their reverence and their love,—if it is to conquer their hearts, and govern their lives, and satisfy their souls,—if it is to become the great absorbing subject of man's thought, and the governing power of our race, it must be so presented, as to prove itself in harmony with all that is highest and best in man's nature, with all that is most beautiful and useful in life, and with all that is beneficent and glorious in the universe.

In a word, old dreamy theologies with their barbarous dialects and silly notions, must be dropped and left to die, and the Church and the ministry must live, and act, and talk as men who are dealing with the grandest and most interesting and important realities.

CHAPTER VII.

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS AND THEIR RESULTS.

AS my readers will have seen before this, the changes in my views were rather numerous, if not always of great importance. And the cases I have given are but samples of many other changes. The fact is, I pared away from my creed everything that was not plainly Scriptural. I threw

Hosted by Google

aside all human theories, all mere guesses about religious matters. I also dismissed all forced or fanciful interpretations of Scripture passages. I endeavored to free Christian doctrines from all corruptions, perversions, or exaggerations, retaining only the pure and simple teachings of Christ and the sacred writings. I accepted only those interpretations of Scripture, which were in accordance with the object and drift of the writer, with common sense, and with the general tenor of the sacred volume. I paid special regard to the plainest and most practical portions of Scripture. I paid no regard to doctrines grounded on solitary passages, or on texts of doubtful meaning, while numerous texts, with their meaning on their very faces, taught opposite doctrines. I would accept nothing that seemed irrational from any quarter, unless required to do so by the plain unquestionable oracles of God. I could see no propriety in Christians encumbering their minds and clogging religion with notions bearing plain and palpable marks of inconsistency or absurdity. And if a doctrine presented itself in different religious writers in a variety of forms, I always took the form which seemed most in harmony with reason and the plainest teachings of Scripture. Some writers seemed to take pleasure in presenting such doctrines as the Trinity, the Atonement, Salvation by Faith, Eternal Punishment, &c., in the most incredible and repulsive forms, straining and wresting the Scriptures to justify their mischievous extravagances. Other writers would say no more on those subjects than the Scriptures said, and would put what the Scriptures said in such a light as to render it "worthy of all acceptation." As a matter of course, the latter kind of writers became my favorites. Indeed the Scriptures seemed always to favor what appeared most rational in the various creeds. The Scriptures and common sense seemed always in remarkable harmony. The doctrines which clashed with reason seemed also to clash with Scripture: and I felt that in rejecting such doctrines I was promoting the honor of God and of Christ, and rendering a service to the Church and Christianity.

I was sometimes rather tried by the unwarranted and inconsiderate statements of my brother ministers. Take an instance. A preacher one night, in a sermon to which I

Hosted by Google

was listening, said, "How great is the love of God to fallen man! Angels sinned, and were doomed at once to everlasting damnation. No Saviour interposed to bring them back to holiness and heaven. No ambassador was sent with offers of pardon to beseech them to be reconciled to God. Man sins, and the Deity Himself becomes incarnate. All the machinery of nature and all the resources of Heaven are employed to save him from destruction. One sin shuts up in everlasting despair millions of spiritual beings, while a thousand transgressions are forgiven to man."

Now this doctrine, instead of reflecting peculiar glory on God, seemed to me to savor of blasphemy. It is no honor to be partial or capricious; it is a reproach. A father that should be tenderly indulgent to one of his children, and rigidly severe to the rest, would be regarded with indignation. The doctrine of Divine partiality shocks both our reason and our moral feelings. And it is not scriptural. The Bible says nothing about God dooming the rebellious angels to perdition for one sin, without any attempt to bring them back to obedience; but it does say that God is good to all, and that His tender mercies are over all His works. I accordingly rejected the doctrine. There was quite a multitude of *doctrines* which entered into the sermons of many of my brother ministers, which never found their way into mine. And there were doctrines which entered into my discourses, which never found their way into theirs. And the doctrines which we held and preached in common, we often presented in very different forms, and put into very different words. They could say a multitude of things which I could not say; things which I could find no kind of warrant for saying. When we met together after hearing each other preach, we had at times long talks about our different views and ways of preaching. I was free in expressing my thoughts and feelings, especially in the earlier years of my ministry, and our conversations were often very animated.

In some circuits, I induced my colleagues to join me in establishing weekly meetings for mutual improvement in religious knowledge. At each meeting an essay was read, on some subject agreed upon at a former meeting, and after the essay had been read we discussed the merits both of the

Hosted by Google

sentiments it embodied, and of the style in which it was written. When it was my turn to prepare an essay, I generally introduced one or more of the points on which I and my colleagues differed, for the purpose of having them discussed. I stated my views with the utmost freedom, and gave every encouragement to my colleagues to state theirs with equal freedom in return. When my colleagues read their productions, I pointed out what I thought erroneous or defective with great plainness and fidelity. I was anxious both to learn and to teach, and it was my delight, as it was my duty and business, to endeavor to do both. I was not, however, so anxious to change the views of my friends as I was to excite in them a thirst for knowledge. And indeed I did not consider it of so much importance that a man should accept a certain number of truths, or particular doctrines, as that he should have a sincere desire, and make suitable endeavors to understand all truth. It was idleness, indifference, a state of mental stagnation, a readiness carelessly to accept whatever might come in the way without once trying to test it by Scripture or reason, that I particularly disliked; and to cure or abate this evil, I exerted myself to the utmost.

When I was stationed in Newcastle in 1831, I met with Foster's Essays, which I read with a great deal of eagerness and pleasure. One of these Essays is "On some of the Causes by which Evangelical Religion has been Rendered Unacceptable to Persons of Cultivated Taste?" Among his remarks on this subject, he has some to the following effect:—

1. Christianity is the religion of many weak, uncultivated and little-minded people, and they, by their unwise ways of talking about it, and by their various defects of character, make religion look weak, and poor, and unreasonable. And many receive their impression or ideas of the character of Christianity more from the exhibitions given of it by the religious people with whom they come in contact, than from the exhibition given of it in the life and teachings of its great Author, or from the characters and writings of His Apostles. An intelligent and cultivated man, for instance, falls into the company of Christians who know little either of the teachings of Christ, or of the

Hosted by Google

wonderful facts which go to prove their truth and their infinite excellency—Christians who never trouble themselves about such matters, and who look on it as no good sign when people show a disposition to inquire seriously into such subjects. He hears those Christians talk about religion, but can find nothing in their conversation but strange and, to him, unintelligible expressions. The speakers give proof enough of excited feelings, but show no sign of mental enlightenment. If he asks them for information on the great principles and bearings of Christianity, they tell him they have nothing to do with vain philosophy.

2. The man of taste and culture hears other Christians harping eternally on two or three points, adopted perhaps from some dreamy author, and denouncing all who question the correctness of their version of the Gospel, as heretics or infidels, while all the time their notions have little or no resemblance either to the Gospel or to common sense; but are at best only perversions or distortions of Christian doctrines, which have no more likeness to the religion of Christ than a few broken bricks have to a beautiful and magnificent palace.

3. In many cases the Christians with whom he meets have not only no general knowledge of religious subjects, but no desire for such knowledge. The Bible is their book, they say, and they want no other. And they make but a pitiful use of that. They do not go to the Bible as to a fountain of infinite knowledge, whose streams of truth blend naturally with all the truths in the universe, but merely to refresh their minds with a few misinterpreted passages, which ignorance and bigotry are accustomed to use to support their misconceptions of Christian doctrine. They use the book not to make them wise, but to keep them ignorant. They dwell for ever on the same irrational fancies, and repeat them for ever in the same outlandish jargon.

4. He meets with other Christians who read a little in other books besides the Bible; but it is just those books that help to keep them from understanding the meaning of the Bible. And the portions of the books which they admire most and quote oftenest, are the silliest and most erroneous portions. They put darkness for light, and light for darkness. The man of culture speaks to them, but they cannot understand

Hosted by Google

him. His thoughts and style are alike out of their line, or beyond their capacity. If at any time they catch a glimpse of his meaning, they are frightened on perceiving that his thoughts are not an exact repetition of their own.

5. Another cause which has tended to render Christianity less acceptable to men of taste and culture, is the peculiar language adopted in the discourses and writings of its *Teachers*. The style of some religious teachers is low, vulgar. The style of a still greater number is barbarous. Men soon feel the language of the *Law* to be barbarous. They would feel the language of theology to be as barbarous, if they were not accustomed to hear it or read it so constantly. The way in which the greater number of evangelical divines express themselves is quite different from that in which men generally express themselves. Their whole cast of phraseology is peculiar. You cannot hear five sentences without feeling that you are listening to a dead or foreign language. To put it into good current English you have to translate it, and the task of translation is as hard, and requires as much study and practice, as that of translating Greek or Hebrew. The language of the pulpit and of religious books is a dialect to itself, and cannot be used in common life or common affairs. If you try to apply it to anything but religion, it becomes ridiculous, and a common kind of wit consists in speaking of common things in pulpit phraseology. A foreign heathen might master our language in its common and classical forms, and be able to understand both our ordinary talk and our ablest authors, yet find himself quite at a loss to understand an evangelical preacher or writer.

Even if our heathen understood religion in its simpler and more natural forms, he would still be unable to understand the common run of religious talkers and writers. If he had religion to learn from such teachers and writers, he would have a double task, first, to get the ideas, and then to learn the uncouth and unnatural language. This peculiar dialect is quite unnecessary. The style of a preacher or a religious writer might be, and, allowing for a few terms, *ought* to be, the same as that of a man talking about ordinary affairs, and matters of common interest and duty. The want of this is one great cause of the little success,

Hosted by Google

both of our preachers at home, and of our missionaries abroad. They hide beneath an unseemly veil, a beauty that should strike all eyes, and win all hearts. Their style is just the opposite of everything that can instruct, attract, command. And it is vain to expect much improvement in the present generation of religious teachers. They could not get a good style without a long and careful study of good authors, and for this many of them have neither the taste nor the needful industry. They would have to begin life anew, to be converted and become as little children, before they could master the task. They cannot *think* of religion but in common words. They cannot think there can be divine truth but in the old phrases. To discontinue them, therefore, and use others, would in their view, be to become heretics or infidels. In truth, many of them seem to have no ideas. Their phrases are not vehicles of ideas, but substitutes for them. If they hear the ideas which their phrases did once signify, expressed ever so plainly in other language, they do not recognise them, and instantly suspect the man who utters them of unsoundness in the faith, and apply to him all the abusive terms of ecclesiastical reproach. For such the common pulpit jargon is the convenient refuge of ignorance, idleness and prejudice.

6. Speaking of certain kinds of religious books, Mr. Foster calls them an accumulation of bad writing, under which the evangelical theology has been buried, and which has contributed to bring its principles into disfavor. He adds: A large proportion of religious books may be sentenced as bad on more accounts than their peculiarity of dialect. One has to regret that their authors did not revere the dignity of their religion too much to surround it and choke it with their works. There is quite a multitude of books which form the perfect vulgar of religious authorship,—a vast exhibition of the most inferior materials that can be called thought, in language too grovelling to be called style. In these books you are mortified to see how low religious thought and expression *can* sink; and you almost wonder how the grand ideas of God and Providence, of redemption and eternity, the noblest ideas known, can shine on a human mind, without imparting some small occasional degree of dignity to its train of thought. You can make allowances

Hosted by Google

for the great defects of private Christians, but when men obtrude their infinite littleness and folly on the public in books, you can hardly help regarding them as inexcusable. True, many of those worthless and mischievous books are evermore disappearing, but others as bad, or but little better, take their places. Look where you will you will meet with them. What estimate can a man have of Christianity who receives his first impressions of it from such books?

7. There are other religious books that are tolerable as to style, but which display no power or prominence of thought, no living vigor of expression; they are flat and dry as a plain of sand. They tease you with the thousandth repetition of common-places, causing a feeling of unspeakable weariness. Though the author is surrounded with rich immeasurable fields of truth and beauty, he treads for ever the same narrow track already trodden into dust.

8. There is a smaller class of religious writers that may be called mock-eloquent writers. They try at a superior style, but forget that true eloquence resides essentially in the thought, the feeling, the character, and that no words can make genuine eloquence out of that which is of no worth or interest. They mistake a gaudy verbosity for eloquence.

9. The moral and theological *materials* of many religious books are as faulty as their style, and the injury they do the Gospel is incalculable. Here is a systematic writer in whose hands all the riches and magnificence of revelation shrink into a meagre list of doctrinal points, and not a single verse in the Bible is allowed to tell its meaning, or even allowed to have one, till it has been forced under torture to maintain one of his points. You are next confronted with a prater about the invisible world, that makes you shrink away into darkness; and then you are met with a grim zealot for such a revolting theory of the Divine attributes and government, that he seems to delight in representing the Deity as a dreadful king of furies, whose dominion is overshadowed with vengeance, whose music is the cries of victims, and whose glory requires to be illustrated by the ruin of His creation. One cannot help deploring that the great mass of religious books were not consigned to the flames before they were permitted to reach the eyes of the public. Books which exhibit Christianity and its claims

Hosted by Google

with insipid feebleness, or which cramp its majesty into an artificial form at once distorted and mean, must grievously injure its influence. An intelligent Christian cannot look into such works without feeling thankful that they were not the books from which he got his conceptions of the Gospel. Nothing would induce him to put them into the hands of an inquiring youth, and he would be sorry to see them on the table of an infidel, or in the library of his children, or of a student for the ministry.—*Foster's Essays.*

These sentiments answered so astonishingly to my own thoughts, that I read them with the greatest delight. I laid them, in substance, before my brethren. I explained them. I illustrated them by quotations from books and sermons. I gave them instances of the various faults pointed out by Foster, taken from their favorite authors, and in some cases from the discourses of living preachers. I wrote several essays on the causes of the slow progress made by Christianity, in which I embodied and illustrated many of Foster's views. I wrote essays on "*Preaching Christ,*" in which I embodied and illustrated Wesley's views on the subject, including his condemnation of what, in his days, was falsely called "*Gospel Preaching.*" I wrote quite a large volume on these subjects, and read the contents, so far as opportunity offered, to my colleagues at our weekly meetings. I was badly requited for my pains. In some cases my colleagues listened to me and stared at me with amazement. They thought I "brought strange things to their ears." One, who is now dead, said I should be really an excellent fellow, he believed, if I could only get the cobwebs swept out of my upper stories. Everything beyond his own poor standing common-places was cobwebs to him, poor fellow. The remarks on this subject in the LIFE of the preacher referred to, show that my ideas and plans at that time are not yet understood by all his brethren.

Travel, they say, frees men from their prejudices. The more they see of the wonders of other countries, and of the manners of other nations, the more moderate becomes their estimate of the marvels, and of some of the views and customs of their native land. And it is certain that the more a man travels through good books by men of different Churches from his own, the less important will some of the

Hosted by Google

peculiarities of his own denomination appear. As ignorance of the world is favorable to blind patriotism and home idolatry, so ignorance of Churches, and systems, and literatures different from our own, is favorable to bigotry and sectarianism. And as free and extended intercourse with foreign nations tends to enlarge and liberalize the mind; so the more extensive a Christian's acquaintance is with different branches of the Church, and with their customs, and writings, and manners, the more likely will his sectarian bigotry and intolerance be to give place to liberal views and to Christian moderation and charity.

But just in proportion as he becomes the subject of this blessed transformation, will he be regarded with suspicion and dread by those who still remain the slaves of ignorance and bigotry.

It was so in my case. I travelled through extensive regions of religious literature different from that of my own Church, and I did so with an earnest desire to learn what was true and good in all. The consequence was the loss of many prejudices, and the modification of many more. I lost my prejudices against all kinds of Christians. I could believe in the salvation both of Quakers and Catholics, and of all between, if they were well disposed, God-fearing, good-living men. I could believe in the salvation of all, not excepting Jews, Turks, and Pagans, who lived according to the light they had, and honestly and faithfully sought for further light. I believed that in every nation he that feared God and worked righteousness was accepted of Him. I believed that honest, faithful souls among the pagans of old would be found at last among the saved. I regarded the moral and spiritual light of the ancient pagans as light from heaven, as divine revelation. I looked on all mankind as equally objects of God's care and love, as His children, under His tuition, though placed for a time in different schools, with different teachers, and with different lesson-books. I came to believe that God was as good as a good man, as good as the kindest and best of fathers, and even better, and I felt assured that He would not permit any well-disposed soul on earth to perish. I believed that some who were first in privileges, would be among the last in blessedness; and that some that were last in privileges would be among the first in blessedness.

Hosted by Google

Yet I believed in missions. I believed that it was the duty of all to share their blessings with others; to give to others the light that God had bestowed on them,—that though *pagans* might be saved without Christian light, if they lived according to the light they had, *Christians* could not be saved if they did not, as they had opportunity, *impart* their superior light to the pagans.

I respected the good moral principles, and the portions of religious truth that I found in the ancient Greek and Roman authors, just as I lamented and condemned the moral and religious errors that I found in Christian books.

"I seized on truth where'er 'twas found,
On Christian or on Heathen ground,"

and made it part of my creed: and I warred with error though entrenched in the strong-holds of the Church. I respected what was true and good in all denominations of Christians; and even in all denominations that *called* themselves Christians, whether they came near enough to Christ to entitle them to that name or not. If I saw anything good in the creeds or the characters of other denominations I accepted it, and tried to embody it in my own creed and character.

And I did, as I thought, see good in every one that I did not see in others. I could see things in some Protestants, which I thought Catholics would do well to imitate; and I could see things among Catholics, which I thought Protestants would do well to imitate. I could see things in Quakerism, which it would have been to the honor and advantage of other Christians to imitate; and I could see good things in other Churches which Quakers would have done well to copy. I could see even among Unitarians of the older and better class, an attention to matters practical, a naturalness of style, and a freedom from certain anti-christian expressions and notions, which it would have been well for orthodox Churches to have made their own; and I could see where Unitarians had both gone too far through their dislike of orthodox error, and fallen short of truth and duty through dread of orthodox weaknesses or imperfections. And I had an idea, that it would

Hosted by Google

be well in all Churches, instead of avoiding, or scolding, or abusing one another, to study each other lovingly, with a view to find how much of truth and goodness they could find in each other, that they could not find in themselves, and how much of error and imperfection they could find in themselves, that they did not find in others. I saw that no Church had got all the truth, or all the goodness, and that no Church was free from anti-christian errors and defects. I saw that to make a perfect Christian creed, we should have to take something out of every creed, and leave other things in every creed behind; and that to secure a perfect exhibition of Christian virtue, and a perfect system of Christian operations, we should have to borrow from each other habits, customs, rules and machinery in the same way, and leave parts of our own to fall into disuse.

And I was willing to act on this principle. I saw that Christ and Christianity were more and better than all the Churches and all the creeds on earth put together, and that all the Churches had errors and faults or failings which Christ and Christianity had not; and I had an idea that one of the grandest sights conceivable would be to set all the disciples of Christ to work striving to get rid of everything anti-christian, and to come as near to Christ, and to each other, as possible, both in truth and virtue.

But to proceed with my story.

I frequently spoke on religious subjects with my colleagues when we met, along with the leading laymen, at the houses of our friends. Some new book, some particular sermon, or some article in the magazine, or perhaps the fulness of one's own mind with the subjects of one's studies, would turn the conversation on the state of the Church and the ministry, and the need of improvement in the theological systems and dialects of the day, and the manner of handling religious subjects generally, both in the pulpit and through the press. Whatever the subject under consideration might be, I expressed myself with the utmost freedom. I stated my beliefs and disbeliefs, my doubts and my convictions, without the least reserve. And I as readily gave my reasons for my views. I was generally prepared with the passages of Scripture bearing on the subjects introduced, and gave them, with my impressions of their

Hosted by Google

meaning. And I did my best to draw my colleagues and friends into a thorough investigation of every point, in hopes that we might all come as near as possible in our views to a full conformity to the teachings of Christ. The results of these conversations, and of my other labors, were in some cases, very satisfactory. Some were led to exercise their minds on religious subjects who had never troubled themselves about such matters before. Some that had been accustomed to think and read a little were led to think and read more, and to better purpose. Some that had been helplessly and miserably perplexed had their minds put right, and were delivered from their distresses. Some had their minds directed more seriously to the practical requirements of Christianity, and labored more, and made more sacrifices, for the prosperity of the Church and the salvation of their fellow-men. In considerable numbers the standard of Christian knowledge and piety was raised, and the general tone of the churches improved.

In other cases the results were of a very different character. During the early years of my religious life I supposed that all professing Christians, and especially all ministers of the Gospel, were anxious to be as wise and good as possible, and that they would be delighted, as I was myself, to get any new, or larger, or clearer views of truth and duty. I judged of others by myself, and gave them credit for the same desires and longings that swelled my own soul. I gave them credit too for unlimited capacities to take in and appreciate the truth, and for any amount of ability to use it, when received, in doing good to others. I had seldom any difficulty in understanding *them;* and it never entered my mind that they would have much difficulty in understanding me. And I never felt myself even tempted, much less disposed, to misrepresent the words or sentiments of my friends, or to take advantage of the freedom with which they spoke, to injure them in the estimation of their friends. I had no intolerance myself, so far as I can recollect, and I had no disposition to cause intolerance in others towards my brethren. How it was with my brethren I will not undertake to say, but, as a person with any knowledge of human nature would have anticipated, I was greatly misunderstood and misrepresented. Some of my col-

Hosted by Google

leagues and friends were in a maze with regard to my views and intentions. Shut up within the narrow confines of some old stereotyped form of faith or fancy into which they had been born, or into which they had been brought they knew not how, and afraid to change or modify one *iota* of their blind belief, investigation, search after truth, enlargement of thought, or change of sentiment, was with them out of the question. The very idea of anything differing from their own traditionary or haphazard belief was, in the estimation of some of them, no less than heresy, treason, or infidelity. Others, who were not so much benighted, were afraid to venture on a free examination of religious matters, or a careful comparison of their views with the teachings of Scripture. Some trusted in their elders, and feared no error so long as they kept in the track of their predecessors. I am not certain that I should go too far if I were to say, that some were under the influence of worldly and selfish motives, and were resolved to take the course which promised to be most conducive to a quiet, easy, self-indulgent life. There were some whose conversations left this impression on my mind. One young minister, when I was pointing out to him some inconsistency between a statement he had made and the teachings of Christ, put an end to the conversation by saying, "I don't want to hear anything about such matters; I know what is expected of a minister of the Methodist New Connexion, and I am resolved to be one; and I shall just hold the doctrines necessary to keep me in the office, and nothing else." And I suppose he did not stand alone.

Some lacked the power to think. They were all but mindless. Whatever they might be able to do in reference to worldly matters, they were unable to think, to compare doctrine with doctrine, or to reason in any respect whatever on religious matters. One young man, a candidate for the ministry, told me that he never had thought matters over in his own mind, but taken what came in his way in books or sermons, never troubling himself, or finding himself able, to do more than to remember and to repeat what he heard or read. He had not the faculty to compare the sayings of men with the sayings of God; or the sayings of one man with the sayings of another. He was a mere dealer in

Hosted by Google

words and phrases, and he aspired to nothing higher than to live by the ignoble occupation. How many of those with whom I came in contact, and in whose society I poured forth so freely the thoughts of my mind, were of the same stamp, I do not know. I never tested any other person so thoroughly as I tested him. There *were* others, however, that had been fashioned in a similar mould.

Others with whom I conversed *had thought*, and had embraced certain views believing them to be true; but they had fallen under the influence of teachers and books of a different cast from those by which my own mind had been chiefly influenced. And they had been led to fix their thoughts almost exclusively on one particular class of Scripture passages, and to neglect or overlook other portions of the sacred volume, though much more numerous, and much more clear in their meaning. They had also been led to adopt certain interpretations of the passages on which their attention had been specially fixed, which a consideration of other passages of Scripture had led me to reject. Thus our minds had run into different moulds, and taken different forms. We differed not only on certain points of doctrine, but in our tastes, and in our rules of judging. The consequence was, that we could never talk long on religious subjects without getting into a dispute, or coming to a dead stand. To make matters worse, this class of people had been led to believe that their peculiar notions were the essential doctrines of the Gospel, and that those who did not believe them could not be Christians. When therefore they found that I looked upon their theories as erroneous and unscriptural, they pronounced me at once an erratic and dangerous man. I imagined, at first, that I could bring these people to see things in a different light. I had such faith in the power of plain Scripture passages, and in the force of common sense, and was so ignorant of the power of prejudice, and of peculiarities of mental constitution, that I conversed and reasoned with them with the greatest freedom and the utmost confidence. But I found at length that my expectations were vain. I was conversing once with a colleague who belonged to this class, on man's natural proneness to evil. He was one of the best and most enlightened of that

Hosted by Google

school of theologians, and he regarded me at the time with very kindly feelings. And we were agreed as to the *fact* of man's natural tendency to evil, but he had been led to rest his belief in the doctrine on somewhat different grounds from those on which my belief rested. And this was enough. He quoted the passage from Isaiah, "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the crown of the head, to the sole of the foot, there is no soundness, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." "Do you think that the Prophet refers in that passage to man's natural proneness to evil?" said I. "What can he refer to else?" said he. "I have been accustomed to regard the words as a figurative description of the miserable state of the Israelites under the terrible judgments of God," I replied. He instantly became red in the face, and said, "Do you mean to deny the natural depravity of man?" I said, "The question is not about the doctrine, but only about the meaning of that particular passage." But all was in vain. I had roused his suspicions and his anger, and the conversation came at once to an end, and he never afterwards regarded me with the same degree of confidence and friendliness as before.

On another occasion a brother minister quoted, as proof that men in their unregenerate state cannot do anything towards their own salvation, the words of Jeremiah, already once referred to, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" "Do you really think," said I, "that the Prophet is speaking, in those words, of men generally?" "What else is he speaking of?" was the answer. "He seems to me to be speaking of a particular class of men, who have been so long accustomed to do wrong, that they have lost the power to do right—having made themselves the helpless slaves of their evil habits. He is not, I think, speaking of the state into which they were *born;* but of the state to which they had *reduced* themselves by long persistence in sin. Hence he says at the conclusion of the passage, 'Then may ye, who are accustomed to do evil, do well.'" "Oh! I suppose you deny the doctrine of natural depravity." "No, I do not," said I. "It is no use saying that," he replied, "when you explain away the passages of Scripture in which the doctrine is taught."

Such encounters between me and my brethren were at

Hosted by Google

one time by no means uncommon. They took place at almost every meeting. The result was often unpleasant. My brethren generally did not like to be disturbed in their notions, or in their way of talking. But few, if any of them, were prepared or disposed to enter on the investigations necessary to enable them to ascertain what was the truth on the points on which we were accustomed to converse. Some had not the power to revise their creeds and their way of talking and preaching, and bring them into harmony with Scripture and common sense. And people of this class were sure to look on all who did not see things in the same light as themselves, as dangerous or damnable heretics. They, of course, concluded that I was not sound in the faith. They felt that I was a troublesome, and feared that I was a lost and ruined man. The remarks which I made to them, they repeated to their friends; and as they seldom succeeded in understanding me properly, their reports were generally incorrect. In some cases my statements were reported with important additions, and in others with serious alterations, and in some cases their meaning was entirely changed. And the change was seldom to my advantage. A difference of expression between me and my brethren was mistaken for a difference of belief; and the disuse of an unscriptural word, was mistaken for a renunciation of a Christian doctrine. A dispute about the "eternal sonship" was mistaken for a dispute about the divinity of Christ, and a difference of opinion about the meaning of a passage of Scripture, came to be reported as the denial of Christ's authority. In one case I gave it as my judgment that there were really righteous people on earth when Christ came into the world, and that it was to such that Christ referred, when He said, He "came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." This was made into an assertion that the coming of Christ was unnecessary. Inability to accept unauthorized definitions and unscriptural theories of Scriptural doctrines, was construed into a denial of those doctrines. My endeavor to strip religious subjects of needless mystery, was represented as an attempt to substitute a vain philosophy for the Gospel of Christ. An expression of dissatisfaction with a grandiloquent but foolish and mis-

Hosted by Google

chievous sermon on the "Cross of Christ," was set down as a proof that my views on the sacrifice of Christ were not evangelical. My endeavors to show that Christianity was in harmony with reason, were mistaken for an attempt to substitute reason for faith, and became the occasion of a rumor that I was running into Pelagianism or Socinianism. My own conviction was, that I was coming nearer to the simplicity, the purity, and the fulness of the Gospel; and that is my conviction still. And those of my brethren in the ministry who were in advance of the rest in point of intelligence and piety, and who were least infected with foolish fear and jealousy, expressed to me their satisfaction with my views and proceedings. And the people listened to my discourses with the greatest delight. They flocked to hear me in crowds; and the crowds continually increased. And many were benefited under my ministry. Sinners were converted, and believers were comforted, and stimulated to greater efforts in the cause of God.

To those, however, who had come to believe that I was drifting towards heresy, all this was the occasion of greater alarm, and my great success and growing popularity led them to make increasing efforts to lessen my influence, or silence me altogether. Their conduct caused me great uneasiness, and it was this that first awakened in me unhappy feeling towards them.

CHAPTER VIII.

A SECOND TENDENCY. PRACTICAL PREACHING.

I HAD a second powerful tendency which helped to get me into trouble, and so became an occasion of unhappy feeling, namely, a *practical* tendency. This was bred in me. It was a family peculiarity; it ran in the blood. My father had it. Religion with him was goodness of heart and goodness of life; fearing God and working righteousness; loving God and keeping His commandments. And his belief and life were one. I never knew a more conscientious or godly man. And I never knew a man who could more truly have uttered the words of the Psalmist: "Lord, my

Hosted by Google

heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty; neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of its mother; my soul is even as a weaned child." What God had left mysterious, he was willing should remain so; he found sufficient to meet his wants and to occupy his thoughts in what He had clearly revealed. He never troubled either himself or his children with those incomprehensible subjects on which many people are so prone to speculate and dogmatize. He read but few books, and those which he read he carefully compared with the sacred Scriptures. The Bible was his only authority, and by it he tested both books and preachers, receiving nothing but what he saw and felt to be in harmony with its spirit and teachings. He liked Bunyan, especially his *Pilgrim's Progress;* and he liked Wesley; but he liked the Bible best. There were no bounds to his love and reverence for the Scriptures. He regarded them as the perfection of all wisdom, the true and perfect unfolding of the mind and will of God. He read them every morning on his knees, before the rest of the family were up. Whatever might be the calls of business, he spent a full hour in this exercise. He read them every noon to his family. He read them at night before retiring to rest. He read them with a sincere desire to learn God's will, and with earnest prayer for Divine help to enable him to do it. He read them till all the plainer and more practical portions were safely lodged in his memory, and deeply engraven on his heart. He read them till their teachings became a part of his very nature, and shone forth in his character in all the beauty of holiness. He was a thorough Christian. The oracles of God were the rule both of his faith and conduct. They leavened his whole soul. They mingled with all his conversation. They were his only counsellors and his chief comforters. They were his law, his politics, his philosophy, his morals. They were his treasure and his song. And he received their teachings in their simple, obvious, common-sense meaning. He had quite a distaste for commentaries, because they would not allow the Scriptures to speak forth their own solemn meaning in their own plain, artless way. He hated the notes to Bunyan's

Hosted by Google

Pilgrim's Progress for the same reason. He could understand the Bible, but he could not understand the explanations of it given by theologians. He would not study theology. He would study the Bible and Christ; he would study precepts and promises, exhortations and warnings, examples and histories; but not theology. And he never bothered us with theology. There was no theology in his conversation. There was none in his prayers. He never used theological terms. In all he said on religious matters, whether to God or man, he used the simplest Bible terms. He seldom talked much to his children about religion; he taught us more by his deeds and spirit than by words; but when he did say anything to us on the subject, it was the pure, unadulterated Word of God. The idea of making us theologians, in the ordinary sense of the word, never entered into his head. He wished us to think and feel and act like Christians, and that was all; and the end of all his counsels and labors was to furnish us unto every good word and work. If he had written a system of divinity, he would have left out most of the things which many put into such books, and put in many which most leave out. It would have been a book to help people to live right and feel right, and not to dream, or speculate, or wrangle. If he had been a preacher, he would have filled his sermons with the living words of Moses and the Prophets, of Christ and His Apostles, and pressed them on the consciences of his hearers with all his might. He would often have "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and a judgment to come," but never troubled his hearers with human theories of Christian doctrines. The drift and scope of his sermons to the ungodly would have been, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon." "Repent and be converted, every one of you, that your sins may be blotted out." The substance of his sermons to believers would have been, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." "Ye are not your own; ye are bought

Hosted by Google

with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are His." "For ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your evil way of life received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ; who gave Himself for you, that He might redeem you from all iniquity, and purify you unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith." He would have spoken of the love of God, and of the death of Christ, and of all the great moving facts and doctrines of the Gospel; but, like the sacred writers, he would have turned them all to practical account. His aim in everything would have been to bring men into subjection to God's will, and into full conformity with the teachings and character of Christ.

My eldest brother was a minister, and this was the character of his preaching. His favorite books were Baxter's works and the Bible. His favorite minister was William Dawson, one of the most practical, earnest, and common-sense preachers that ever occupied a pulpit. Like his father, he kept scrupulously to the simple teachings of the Scriptures, and he was once charged with unsoundness in the faith, because he would not be wise above what was revealed, nor preach more than the Gospel committed to him by Christ.

It was the same with myself. I looked on Christianity, from the first, as a means of enlightening and regenerating mankind, and changing them into the likeness of Christ and of God. In other words, I regarded it as a grand instrument appointed by God, for making bad men into good men, and good men always better, thus fitting them for all the duties of life, and all the blessedness they were created to enjoy. And I considered that the great business of a Christian minister was to use it for those great ends. And I think so still.

Hosted by Google

The Bible is the most practical book under heaven, and I cannot conceive how any one can read it carefully, with a mind unbiased by prejudice or evil feeling, without perceiving that its great object is to bring men to fear and love God, and to make them perfect in every good work to do His will. How any one can study Christianity without perceiving that its design is to bring men into harmony with God, both in heart and action, and to make them steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, is a mystery to me. Antinomianism is Antichrist. The preaching which tends to lessen men's sense of duty, or to reconcile people to a selfish, idle, or useless life, is contrary both to Christianity and common sense. And all interpretations of Scripture which favor the doctrine that men have nothing to do but to believe and trust in Christ, are madness or impiety. The impression which God seeks to make on our minds from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation is, that if we would have His favor and blessing, we must do His will. The whole Bible is one great lesson of piety and virtue, of love and beneficence. Christ is "the Author of eternal salvation to those" only "who obey Him." Those who obey Him not He will punish with everlasting destruction. Christ and His Apostles agree that, if we would see God and have eternal life, we must be "holy as God is holy," "merciful as our Father in heaven is merciful," "righteous as Christ was righteous;"—that God, who is love, and Christ, who is God, must dwell in us, live in us, work in us;—that carnal, sinful self must die, and "grace reign in us through righteousness unto eternal life."

I know what can be said about doctrines; but there are no doctrines in the Scriptures at variance with the principle that "God will render to every man according to his deeds,—that to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life; and that to them who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, He will recompense indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish." Nay, the doctrines of Scripture are employed throughout as motives and inducements to righteousness. This is their use. The truth is taught us that it may make us free from sin, and sanctify both our hearts and lives to God.

Hosted by Google

The Word of God, the doctrine of Christ, is sown in our hearts as seed in the ground, that it may bring forth in our lives "the fruits of righteousness." The office of faith in Christ and His doctrine is, to "work by love," to make us "new creatures," and so bring us to keep God's commandments. The blindest man on earth is not more blind than the man who can read the Scriptures without perceiving that their object is to make men "perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

As I had never been placed for instruction under any Antinomian theologian, and had never been taught at home, either by word or deed, to wrest the Scriptures from their plain and simple meaning, I naturally became a thoroughly practical preacher. I took practical texts: I preached practical sermons. The first text from which I preached was, "Say ye to the righteous, it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Wo unto the wicked, it shall be ill with him; for the reward of his hands shall be given him." The second was, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The third was, "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and spirits, which are God's." And the fourth was, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." The following were among my principal texts and subjects for many years: "Occupy till I come." "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." "He that showeth mercy with cheerfulness." "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful." "He that winneth souls is wise." "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The Good Samaritan. The Prodigal Son. The Barren Fig-tree. The Hatefulness and Wickedness of Lukewarmness. The Woman that did what she could. The Christian's Race. The Good Steward. The duty of Christians to strive with one heart and one mind for the faith of the Gospel. The example of Christ. "Give no occasion to the adversary to preach reproachfully." "And now abideth faith, hope, charity,

Hosted by Google

these three; but the greatest of these is charity." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work." "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one, in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself lest thou also be tempted." "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Feed My sheep." "Feed My lambs." "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." "Remember the poor." "Freely ye have received; freely give." "It is more blessed to give than to receive." I had quite a multitude of such subjects.

I did not however confine myself to these. I did my best to declare the whole counsel of God. I kept back nothing that seemed likely to be useful to my hearers. I spoke on the love of God,—on the condescension of Christ,—of His unparalleled love in giving Himself a sacrifice for our salvation. I spoke of His sufferings and death,—of His resurrection and mediation,—of His sympathy with our sorrows,—of His coming to judgment. I spoke of the miseries of sin,—of the pleasures of religion,—of the joys of heaven,—of the pains of hell,—of providence, and of trust in God. In short, I preached on every great doctrine of revelation as I had opportunity. I revered all God's truth, and I preached on every part of it with fidelity. But I treated everything in a practical way. I used every sub-

Hosted by Google

ject as a means or motive to holiness and usefulness. And this, I believe, was right. The Apostles did so,—Christ did so,—and they are the Christian minister's examples.

I had a partiality for practical books. As I have already said, among my favorite English authors were Hooker, and Baxter, and Barrow, and Howe, and Jeremy Taylor, and Penn, and Tillotson, and Law. Baxter stood first, and my favorite books were his *Christian Directory*, his *Life of Faith*, his *Crucifixion of the World by the Cross of Christ*, and his *Directions for Settled Peace of Conscience*. But, in truth, it is hard to say which of his works I did not regard as favorites. I liked his *Catholic Theology*, his *Aphorisms on Justification*, his *Confessions*, and even his Latin *Methodus Theologiæ*. I read him everlastingly. I read Law and Barrow too, till I almost knew many of their works by heart. I studied Penn from beginning to end. And I never got tired of reading Hooker. I regarded his *Ecclesiastical Polity* as one of the richest, sweetest, wisest, saintliest books under heaven.

My favorite French authors were Massillon, Fenelon, Flechier, Bourdaloue and Saurin, all practical preachers. Massillon moved me most. I have read him now at intervals for more than forty years, and I read him still with undiminished profit and delight. He is the greatest of all preachers; the most eloquent, the most powerful; and his works abound with the grandest, the profoundest, the most impressive and overpowering views of truth and duty.

Among the Fathers I liked Lactantius and Chrysostom best, not only for the superiority of their style, but for the common sense and practical character of their sentiments.

My favorite Methodist author, when I first began my Christian career, was Benson. His sermons were full of fervor and power. I felt less interest in Wesley at first. I was incapable of duly appreciating his works. As I grew older, and got more sense, my estimate both of his character and writings rose, and now I like him better, and esteem him more highly, than at any former period of my life. And I like his latest writings best.

I liked Fletcher very much, partly on account of the good, kind Christian feeling that pervaded his writings, and partly on account of his able and unanswerable defence of

Hosted by Google

the enlightened and scriptural views of Wesley, as set forth in the Minutes of 1771.

Among the later Dissenting writers, Robert Hall was my favorite. I liked many things in the writings of John Angell James; but there were other things, especially in his *Anxious Inquirer*, that appeared to savor more of mysticism than of Christianity, and that seemed better calculated to perplex and embarrass young disciples of Christ, than to afford them guidance and comfort.

There were many other good authors whom I read and prized, but most of the above I read till their thoughts and feelings became, to a great extent, my own; and the effect of all was to strengthen the already strong practical tendency of my mind.

But no book did so much to make me a practical preacher as the Bible. It is practical throughout—intensely practical, and nothing else but practical. The moment it introduces man to our notice, it presents him as subject to God's law, and represents his life and blessedness as depending entirely on his obedience. God is presented from the first as an avenger of sin, and as a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. In His address to Cain He sets forth the whole principle of His government: 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? But if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door.' Enoch is translated because he walked with God. The world is destroyed because of its wickedness, and Noah is saved because of his righteousness. Abraham is blessed because he observes the statutes and judgments of God, and because he is ready to make the greatest sacrifices out of respect to His commands. The sum of the whole revelation given to the Jews is, "Behold I set before you life and death, a blessing and a curse. Obey, and all conceivable blessings shall be your portion: disobey, and all imaginable curses shall fall on you." The history of the Jews is an everlasting story of obedience and prosperity, of disobedience and adversity. The history of individuals is the same. The just live; the wicked die. The good are honored; the bad are put to shame. The Psalms, the Proverbs, and the Prophets are all lessons of righteousness. Righteousness exalteth nations; sin brings them down to destruction. And Jesus and Paul, and Peter and

Hosted by Google

James, and Jude and John, have all one aim, to bless men by turning them away from their iniquities, and by urging them to perpetual advancement in holiness. All the histories, all the biographies, all the prophecies, all the parables, all the preaching, all the praying, all the writing, all the reasoning, all the things the Book contains, have just one object, to make men good, and urge them to grow continually better. All the doctrines are practical, and are used as motives to purity, love and beneficence. All the promises are given to support and cheer people in the faithful discharge of their duty. All the warnings are to keep men from idleness, selfishness and sin. The Church and all its ministries; the Scriptures and all their revelations; Providence and all its dispensations; nature and all her operations, are all presented as means and motives to a life of holy love and usefulness. The Bible has nothing, is nothing, but laws and lessons, aiming at the illumination, the sanctification, the moral and spiritual perfection of mankind.

Idleness and selfishness are the greatest of all heresies, and love and beneficence the perfection of all religion. No doctrine can be falser or more anti-christian than the doctrine that a man may sow one thing and reap another; that he may sow tares and reap wheat; or sow cockle and reap barley—that he can grow thistles and reap figs, or plant thorns and gather grapes. 'He that doeth good is of God;' 'he that committeth sin is of the devil.' 'By this we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.' 'By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.' 'Ye know that every one that doeth righteousness, or lives to do good, is born of God.' 'By their fruits ye shall know them.' Good trees will bring forth good fruit, bad trees will bring forth bad fruit. 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire.'

But to give all the practical passages the Bible contains you must quote the substance, the soul, the bulk of the whole Book. It is all of a piece. It has one aim and one tendency from beginning to end, to kill sin and foster righteousness, to crush selfishness and develop philanthropy. It consists of a multitude of parts, written in different ages, by a great variety of authors, in a great variety of styles,

Hosted by Google

but it has one spirit, the spirit of truth and righteousness. And the last oracles it contains are like the first: 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord;' they rest from their labors, and their works follow them.' 'Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life, and enter in through the gates into the city.'

Under the influence of this most rational, common-sense, practical Book, what could I do but become a thoroughly practical preacher? What could I do but drink in its blessed, god-like lessons, and make it the great business of my life to teach them and preach them to my hearers, and urge them on their consciences as the governing principles of their hearts and lives?

The book of nature preaches the same practical Gospel as the Bible. There is not a creature on earth that is not required to work. Birds, beasts and insects must all labor, or die. The birds must build their nests, and gather supplies of food for themselves and their young, or they would all perish. The cattle must graze, or browse, or burrow, or dive, or lack their needed supplies of food. The beaver must build its dam, and the wolf must dig its hole, and both must labor for their daily food. The bee must gather her wax, and build her cell, and fetch home her honey, or starve. The ant must build her palace and look out for food both for herself and her family. The spider must spin her thread, and weave her web, and watch all day for her prey. All seek their food from God, and obtain it at his hands as the reward of their industry.

Every organ in man's body has to work, or the body, with all its organs, would die. The lungs must be continually breathing, and the heart incessantly beating, and the blood perpetually running its mysterious round, or the whole frame would perish. And the hands must work, and the feet must walk, and the eyes must look, and the ears must listen, and the tongue must talk. And the jaws must grind our food, and the stomach digest it, and the liver and the spleen, and the brain and the bowels, and the nerves and the glands must all co-operate, or we hasten to the dust.

And so it is through every department of nature. All things are full of labor. The vegetable world serves the animal world, and the animal world serves the vegetable world,

Hosted by Google

and the mineral and meteorological worlds serve them both. And the branches of the tree shed their leaves to feed the roots, and the roots collect moisture and nutriment from the soil to feed the branches and the leaves. And the clouds let fall their showers, and the sun sheds down his warmth and light, and the more mysterious powers of nature exert their secret influences, and all things are thus kept right. And the winds keep ever in motion, bearing away the surplus cold of one region to temper the excessive heat of another, and carrying back the surplus heat of the warmer climes, to soften the rigors of the colder ones. And so throughout the universe. There is not an idle orb in the whole heavens, nor is there an idle atom on earth. The sun the moon and the stars are in eternal motion, and are evermore exerting their wondrous influences for the good of the whole universe. And the streams are ever flowing, and the sea is ever toiling. The great things and the small, the seen and the unseen, the conscious and the unconscious, are all at work, helping themselves, and serving each other, and contributing with one consent to the welfare of the great mysterious whole. Nature's laws are so framed that idleness is everywhere punished, and honest industry everywhere rewarded. Everywhere obedience is life, and disobedience death. Salvation by works is the principle of the Divine Government throughout the universe, among all the creatures of God.

My favorite preachers were William Dawson, David Stoner and James Parsons, all eloquent and earnest men, and all decidedly practical. I never missed an opportunity of hearing them if they came within five or six miles of the place where I lived. And many of their sermons which I heard more than forty years ago are still fresh in my memory, and continue to exert a happy influence on my heart.

William Dawson was a local preacher, a farmer. He was a large, broad-chested, big-headed, strong built man,—one of the finest specimens of a well-made, thoroughly developed Englishman I ever saw. And he was full of life. There was not a sluggish atom in his whole body, nor a slow-going faculty in his whole soul. He had eyes like fire; and his face was the most expressive I ever looked upon. And his voice was loud as the fall of mighty waters.

Hosted by Google

And it was wonderfully flexible, and full of music. And he always spoke in natural tones. There was nothing like cant or monotony in his utterance. Yet he would raise his voice to such a pitch at times that you could hear him half a mile away. He was the most perfect actor I ever saw, because he was not an actor at all, but awful, absolute reality. And he was a man of wonderful intelligence and good sense. And he was well read. His mind was full to overflowing of the soundest religious knowledge. And his good sound sense had no perceptible admixture of nonsense. Every sentence answered to your best ideas of the right, the true, the holy, the divine. His grammar, his logic, and his rhetoric were perfect, and all nature seemed to stand by to supply him with apt, and striking, and touching illustrations. And his soul was full of feeling. He seemed to sympathize with every form of humanity, from the helpless babe to tottering age, and to be one with them in all their joys and sorrows, and in all their hopes and fears. And now he would cry with the crying child, and then he would wail with the afflicted mother. All that is great, all that is tender, all that is terrible,—all nature, with all that is human, and much that was divine, seemed incarnated in him. He was the most wonderful embodiment of all that goes to make a great, a mighty, a complete man, and a good, an able, and an all-powerful preacher, it ever was my privilege to see. As a matter of course, his prayers, his sermons, and his public speeches were irresistible. Sinners trembled, and fell on their knees praying and howling. Saints shouted, and lost themselves in transports. His congregations were always crowded, and the dense, mixed masses of men and women, good and evil, old and young, all were moved by him like the sea by a strong wind. All understood him: all felt him; and all were awed and bowed as by the power of God. His sermons were always practical. Whether he spake to the saint or the sinner, he went directly to the conscience. And all that he said you saw. Sin stared you full in the face and looked unspeakably sinful; it rose and stood before you a monster group of all imaginable horrors and abominations. The sinner shook, he shrank, he writhed at the sight, in mortal agony. God, as Dawson pictured Him, was

Hosted by Google

terrible in majesty and infinite in glory. Jesus was the perfection of tenderness, of love, and power, and almighty to save. Thousands were converted under him. His influence pervaded the whole country, and was everywhere a check on evil, and a power for good. The effect of his ministry on me, on my imagination, my mind and my heart, was living and powerful to the last degree, and I remember his sermons, and feel his power, to the present day, and he will dwell in my memory, to be loved and honored, as long as I live.

David Stoner was a travelling preacher. He lived in the same village as William Dawson, and was a member of his class. He was a disciple of Dawson in every respect, but in no respect a servile imitator. He was a man and not a slave. And he had much of Dawson's sense, and much of Dawson's power, though little or nothing of Dawson's natural dramatic manner. He was a fountain pouring forth a perpetual stream of truth and holy influence. The two were one in love, and light, and power, but in manner they differed as much as any two powerful preachers I ever knew. Both live in my soul, and speak with my voice, and write with my pen. Both had an influence in determining both the method of my preaching and the manner of my life in my early days.

James Parsons was a Congregationalist. His character, and the character of his preaching, may be learned from his published sermons. But, strange to say, the sermons published by himself, are not near so good, nor do they convey half so good an idea of his power, as those reported by shorthand writers and published by others. He was more, and better, and mightier in the pulpit, before a large and living congregation, than in his closet alone. My remembrance of these three great and godly men, and powerful Christian ministers, is a rich and eternal treasure. I can never come near them, but I may follow them, as I did in the days of my youth, "Afar off."

Whether the strong practical tendency of my mind did not carry me too far sometimes, and make my preaching somewhat one-sided, I cannot say. I may not be considered qualified to judge. I have, however, an opinion on the subject. My impression is, that my method of preaching

Hosted by Google

was thoroughly scriptural and evangelical. And it was, I believe, the kind of preaching which the Church and the world particularly needed. It was, too, the kind of preaching to which I believe I was specially called, and for which I was specially fitted. It was the only kind in which I felt myself perfectly at home. And the effects were good. Sinners were converted. Unbelievers were convinced. And believers were improved and comforted. They were led to read and study the Scriptures more, and to read and study them with greater pleasure, and to greater profit. They became more enamoured of Christianity, more zealous for its spread, and more able in its defence.

And the societies among which I labored always prospered, and those among which I labored most prospered most abundantly. My labors proved especially useful to the young. My classes were crowded with thoughtful, earnest, inquiring youths. And those who fell under my influence became, as a rule, intelligent, devoted, and useful characters. Not a few of them continue laborious and exemplary Christians, and able and successful ministers, to the present day. I meet with good and useful people almost everywhere, many of whom are in the ministry, who acknowledge me as their spiritual father, and consider themselves indebted to my former ministry, and to my early writings, both for their standing and usefulness in the Church, and for their success and happiness in life.

One would suppose that a method of preaching which was followed by such happy results, should have been encouraged. And so it was by the great mass of the people. They heard me gladly. They came in crowds wherever I was announced to preach, and filled the largest chapels to their utmost capacity. They drank in my words with eagerness, and made no secret of the place I occupied in their affection and esteem. But many of my brethren in the ministry regarded me with great disquietude. They thought my preaching grievously defective. "It failed," they said, "to give due prominence to the distinctive features of the gospel economy." "It is good," they would say, "as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. It is too vague, too general. His sermons are beautiful and good in their way, but they are not the Gospel. They are

Hosted by Google

true; but they are not the whole truth. There is not enough of Christ in them. We find fault with them, not for what they *contain*, but for what they do *not* contain. True, they make mention of the great facts and doctrines of Christianity, but they do not make enough of them: they do not dwell on them as their constant theme." They made many such complaints. They charged me with winning from my hearers, for a partial and defective view of the Gospel, the love and reverence which were due only to a very different view. They called me a legalist, a work-monger, and other offensive names. They charged me too with spoiling the people, with giving them a distaste for ordinary kinds of preaching, and making it hard for other preachers to follow me. The complaints they whispered in the ears of their friends soon found their way to mine. I endeavored to justify myself by appeals to Scripture, to Wesley, and to other authorities. It would have been better perhaps if I had kept silent and gone quietly on with my work. But some of my friends thought otherwise. They wished to be furnished with answers to my traducers, and so constrained me to speak. My defence only led to renewed and more violent attacks. My opponents could not think well of my style of preaching, without thinking ill of their own. They could not acknowledge my method to be evangelical, without confessing their own to be grievously defective, and to have expected them to do that would have been the extreme of folly. They could do no other therefore than regard me as a dangerous man, and do what they could to bring my preaching and sentiments into suspicion, and prepare the way for my exclusion from the ministry. This was the second cause of the unhappy feeling which took possession of my mind.

A few quotations from a Journal written about this time may be of use and interest here.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER IX.

EXTRACTS FROM MY DIARY.

I HEARD T. Batty yesterday. His text was, "Come unto Me all ye that labor, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." He urged people to come to Christ, but he never told them what it was to come to Him. We cannot come to Him literally now, as people did when He was on earth; but we can leave all other teachers and guides, and renounce the dominion of our appetites and passions, and put ourselves under His teaching and government. In other words, we can become Christians; we can learn Christ's doctrine and obey it, and, thus obeying, trust in Him for salvation. But Mr. Batty said not a word about this. He talked as if all that people had to do, was to roll themselves on Christ, or cast themselves on Him just as they were. He made all the passages about bringing forth fruits meet for repentance,—hearing Christ's words and doing them,—denying ourselves and taking up our cross,—using our talents, working in His cause, &c., of no effect. He said, "Come just as you are. If you tarry till you are better, you will never come at all;" which seems to me, neither Scripture nor common sense. To come to Christ, in the proper sense of the words, is to become better;—it is to cease to live to ourselves and sin, and to live to God. Hence Christ, in connection with Mr. Batty's text says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of Me, for I am meek, and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The meaning of this is, give up the service of self and sin, and serve me. Take me for your pattern, and be as I am, and live as I live." But he never noticed the latter part of the passage.

—What a blessed thing it is to have so many good books! They are a world of comfort to me, as well as a means of ever-increasing spiritual good. And they are evermore startling and delighting me with striking oracles of Christian truth. Here is one from Baxter. "Every truth of God is appointed to be His instrument, to do some holy

Hosted by Google

work upon your heart! *Charity* is the end of *truth.*" Here is another: "The Gospel is a seal, on which is engraven the portrait, the likeness of Christ. Our hearts are the wax, on which the seal should be impressed, and to which the likeness should be transferred. The duty of ministers and of all religious teachers is to apply the seal to men's hearts, that all may be brought to bear the image, the likeness of Christ."

—I always placed the moral element of religion above the doctrinal; charity above faith; good living above any kind of opinions.

—This afternoon Mr. Burrows preached on Mary's choice, but he left the matter in a mist. He talked about sitting at Christ's feet, but did not say what it meant. We cannot do that literally now; but we can do what amounts to the same thing. We can *read* Christ's words in the *Gospels*, as Mary *heard* them from His *lips;* and we can do as He bids us, and look to Him for all we need. And this, in truth, is the "one thing needful." But he did not put the matter in this light. He probably did not see it in this light. He would have been afraid perhaps to receive or to give so simple an explanation of the matter.

I had a talk with Mr. Woodhouse last night, about man's natural state. He preached on the subject on Tuesday night, and said things which, to me, seemed unwarranted. He said men can do nothing good, till they are regenerated.

Is that your idea? said I.

Of course. Are they not *dead?* And what can dead men do?

I suppose they can do as God bids them, "Arise from the dead." You spoke of the result of Adam's sin, but you said nothing of the effect of the second Adam's doings. Now I believe that we are put in as good a position by Christ, for serving God and obtaining heaven, as we should have been if Adam had not sinned. I believe men have good thoughts, good feelings, and do good things, before they are regenerated; and that they are regenerated in consequence of their good thoughts, good purposes, and good deeds. "They consider their ways," and turn to God. They cease to do evil, and learn to do well, and so get washed. They purify their hearts in obeying

Hosted by Google

the truth. They cleanse their hands and purify their hearts. They come out from the ungodly, and leave their ungodly ways, and then God receives them. They hear God's word or read it; and faith comes by hearing and reading; and faith works by love, and makes them new creatures.

Besides, you know we could not help what Adam did, and you talked as if Adam's sin made it impossible for us to do anything else but sin, thus throwing the blame of the sins of all the unregenerate on Adam; and that is neither Scriptural nor wise. There are two tendencies in unregenerate people, one to good, and one to evil, and it is their duty to resist the one and obey the other, and thus to seek for regeneration. That is as I understand the Bible. And I always try to make people believe and feel, that if they do not get regenerated, and keep God's commandments, it is their own fault, and neither Adam's nor God's.

We talked nearly an hour, but I fancy Mr. W. did not seem to understand either me or the Bible. It is strange that people can't take God's word as it stands, and content themselves with speaking as the oracles of God speak. If we can't do anything but sin till we are regenerated, who is to blame for our sin, but He who neglects to regenerate us? What horrible notions are mistaken by some for Gospel? "Send out, O God, thy light and truth; let them lead me and guide me."

—Poor Mr. Woodhouse is full of trouble. He thinks me wrong, but does not see how to put me right.

—What a curious creature Mr. Batty is. How in the world did he come to be a preacher? A stranger, sillier talker I think I never heard. I cannot say he is childish exactly. Children talk nonsense plenty sometimes, but no child could talk the kind of nonsense Mr. Batty talks. Last night his text was, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." But he forgot the Holy Ghost, and talked only about fire. His object seemed to be to prove that fire would *burn*. He mentioned several fires spoken of in the Bible that *did* burn, such as the fire that consumed Sodom and Gomorrah; the fire that formed one of the plagues of Egypt; &c., but he came at length on the fire in the bush that Moses saw, and, poor man, he was

Hosted by Google

obliged to acknowledge that that would not burn. The bush was unconsumed. He got away from that fire as soon as he could, and found a number of other fires that *did* burn. By and by however he came upon the burning fiery furnace of Nebuchadnezzar. This would burn *some* that were thrown into it, but it would not burn others. Then he talked about the fire of Moscow, and said, that *that* fire gave as much light to the moon, as the moon gives to the earth, and he added, that the flames of the burning city made such a blaze, that we might have seen it in England, if it had not been for the hills. And this is the talk that sensible people are expected to go and hear.

—Mr. W. preached one of Mr. Melville's sermons last night. It was a good one though, and I had rather a man preached another man's good sense, than his own nonsense. And I had rather hear a good sermon read, than a bad one spoken. Let us have good sound sense, real Christian doctrine, and fervent Christian love, in the first place, and then as many other good things as we can get. But do let the children of God have good wholesome bread, the bread of heaven, and pure living water from the wells of salvation. Don't try to feed men's souls with chaff or chopped straw, and don't give them mud or muddy water to drink.

—Heard Mr. Hulme last night on "The Cross of Christ." The sermon was an attempt at fine preaching. It was not to my taste. The preacher did not seem to understand his subject. What he said had nothing to do with the conscience or the heart. It was talk,—tumid talk—high-swelling words, nothing more.

—Heard Mr. Allen preach on the Flood. He talked a deal about granite—labored hard to prove something; but whether he succeeded or not, I cannot exactly tell. It was a "*great* sermon" and had little effect. I did not feel much interest in it.

—Heard him preach another great sermon on Isaiah's vision. It amounted to nothing. I prefer a simpler and more practical kind of preaching.

—Heard him preach another sermon on death by Adam. It was not so great nor so foolish as the others. The logic was wearisome, but the application was tolerable.

—Heard Dr. Newton, on preaching Christ. His views

Hosted by Google

on the subject are very different from Wesley's, and as different from mine. I have heard many silly sermons on the subject, but not one wise one. Many seem to be afraid of being sensible on religious subjects. They are wise enough on smaller matters; it is only on the greatest that their understandings are at fault. But the silliest preachers repeat good words in their sermons, such as Christ, God, love and heaven, and these words no doubt call up good thoughts, and revive good feelings in the minds of people, so that the most pitiful preachers may be of some use. But how much more useful would good, sound, sensible and truly Christian preachers be, who always talked plain Christian truth, and pressed it home in a loving, Christ-like spirit.

—Heard Mr. Curtis last night. His text and introduction were good; but the sermon was good for nothing.

—Heard Mr. Pea this afternoon. The chief use of many preachers is to visit the members, and stand at the head of the societies as centres of union. They do not do much good by preaching.

—God save me from error and sin. Lead me in the way of truth and righteousness. I feel a dreadful contempt for some men's preaching. Save me from going too far. But really, to hear how careful some are to warn people against thinking too highly of good works, one might suppose that the world and the Church were going to be sent to perdition for too much piety and charity; for doing too much good, and making too many sacrifices for God and the salvation of the world. O fools and blind, not to see, that selfishness, idleness, luxury, pride, worldliness, slavery to fashion, neglect of the Bible, ignorance and lukewarmness are the things which disgrace and weaken the Church, and hinder the salvation of mankind.

—Mr. Stoner preached powerfully last night. He said all true Christians would "sigh and cry on account of the abominations that are done in the land,—that they would accompany their sighing and crying with ceaseless labors for the removal of those abominations,—that they would try to bring the world into the Church, and lift up the Church to the standard exhibited in the life and character of Christ,—that they would pray, teach, live and give, and

Hosted by Google

if needful, suffer for this great end." I have not heard such a practical,—such a truly Christian Gospel sermon for a long time.

—I notice, that in some men's mouths, evangelical sermons mean theological sermons,—wood, hay, and stubble sermons,—sermons without any Gospel in them; and that sermons which *are* evangelical indeed, they talk of as legal, moral, dry.

—Mr. Lynn preached on the fall of Jericho yesterday. It was quite a dramatic sermon, and it was plainly interesting to the congregation. I expect it was useful too. There was not much Christian truth in it, but it stirred the people's better feelings. It made them feel like doing something for God. The nonsensical theology introduced would not be understood I hope.

—Heard Mr. T. Parsons preach a beautiful Christian sermon on "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." It was full of useful instruction and needful caution, and it was uttered in a truly Christian spirit. It did me good.

—Heard Mr. Scott on justification. He ventured to "speak as the oracles of God." It was a thoroughly Gospel and Wesleyan sermon. He was plainer than he is in his pamphlets on that subject. I can't say he *made* the subject plain, for it was plain already in the Bible—but he *left* it plain, and that is saying a great deal. He said that the simple way for a man who believes in Christ, to obtain pardon and eternal life is, to do God's will. I distinguish between faith and trust; faith is *belief;* trust or hope is one of its fruits. People *believe* in Christ, and turn to God; then they *trust* in Christ and find peace. He did not state this point with sufficient clearness; and that was the only defect I saw in the discourse. How rich and how apt he is in Scriptural quotations and illustrations! I had rather hear one of his discourses, than ten of Mr. Allin's. And I had rather hear ten of his, than one of Mr. Allin's. I had rather hear one of Mr. Allin's, than ten; and I had rather hear ten of Mr. Scott's than one. I could listen to Mr. Scott the whole year round.

Hosted by Google

—I have just been reading a big book, nearly five hundred pages, on the way of salvation. The Scriptures explain the way of salvation in less than a thousandth part the space. "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" that's the first thing: "Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord:" that's the second. These two include the whole way of salvation. "Blessed is every one that hears the word of God and keeps it." This is both in one. Mystery makers would be a proper name for some theologians. "In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin;" and there's a fearful multitude of words,—idle words, and mischievous ones too,—in that Book. "When will vain words have an end?"

—Mr. Hatman preached on instantaneous sanctification last night. He was very confused, and, as I think, inconsistent in his remarks; and his arguing about the instantaneousness of sanctification seemed weak. Sanctification, in Scripture language, means, 1. Separation of things and persons from common uses, and consecration to sacred uses. 2. Purification. A man is sanctified in the first sense when he ceases to do evil, and begins to do well; and he is sanctified in the second sense in proportion as he is freed from inward defilement, from bad passions, bad tempers, bad dispositions, bad tendencies, and filled with love to God, to Christ, to God's people, to mankind at large, and to all things true and good. There is no mystery about sanctification. People are sanctified by God's truth. Christ's doctrine enters the mind, and is the means of changing both the disposition and the life. Men are sanctified by the Spirit, using the truth as its instrument. They are sanctified by afflictions, used by God as means to bring them to think on the truth, and see its meaning, and feel its power. They are sanctified by faith, which is a belief in the Truth. They are sanctified by their own efforts, "Cleansing themselves from all filthiness, both of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." "For every one that hath this hope,—the Christian hope of heaven,—in him, purifieth himself even as God is pure." All this is perfectly plain. But where does the Scripture say anything about people being wholly sanctified, or perfected in goodness, instantaneously, by some

Hosted by Google

particular act of faith? "But God can do it in an instant," said Mr. Hatman. But it is not all God's work. It is partly ours; and it is partly the truth's. Can *man* purify himself as God is pure, in an instant? God could make a babe into a man in an instant, for anything I know; but that is not His way. He allows it to grow gradually, first by the use of milk and exercise, and then by the use of stronger meat, and greater labors. And according to Scripture, this is His plan of bringing up spiritual babes to spiritual manhood. God could make seed produce a crop instantaneously, if He would, I suppose; but His plan is to let the grain grow and ripen gradually. And it is His plan, according to Scripture, to let the spiritual grain grow up and the spiritual harvest ripen gradually. And it is better it should be so. Gradual growth in knowledge and goodness is most conducive, I believe, to the happiness of man. I would not make a child into a man all at once if I could. I would let him have the pleasure and the privilege of passing, in the ordinary way, through all the intermediate stages. Nor would I alter the arrangement with regard to spiritual growth. It is best to learn a lesson at a time. You might raise the dough quicker by gunpowder than by leaven or yeast; but I prefer to see it raised in the ordinary way. I am content to grow in grace and knowledge, as people grow in strength and stature. It is God's plan, and I like it. If anybody can pass from the gates of hell to the gates of heaven, from the bottom of the horrible pit to the top of the delectable mountains at a jump, let him; I prefer to trudge with ordinary pilgrims, and enjoy the pleasures of the journey, and the beautiful scenery of the road, at my leisure. "The ways are ways of pleasantness; the paths are paths of peace;" and I enjoy them. And I would not for the world, make the impression on people's minds, that they are in danger of perdition, if they cannot skip across the universe from hell to heaven in no time. God likes spiritual children as well as spiritual men, though He would not have them to continue children. Why should preachers make things hard that God makes easy, and require impossible tasks where God asks only a reasonable service? Some folks have little minds, and some have

Hosted by Google

crooked ones. That's my view of the matter. I am charged with rejecting God's truth. The fact however is, God's truth is the joy and rejoicing of my heart. It is my pleasant food. But I do not like some people's manglement of that truth, and I sometimes think the manglers belong to the class of whom Christ said, "It were good for those men if they had never been born." They lay stumbling-blocks in men's ways, and cause them to fall into doubt, perplexity, and misery. I am a believer in sanctification,—full sanctification,—but I won't go beyond the Bible in what I say, either on this or any other point. I will go as far as the Bible, but no farther.

—Christianity is love; and love prompts to diligence in all good works. To be a Christian is to have the mind of Christ; but the mind of Christ was a self-sacrificing mind. "He pleased not Himself," but lived and labored, suffered and died, for the welfare of mankind.

How seldom one hears a sermon on living for the good of others,—on loving our neighbors as ourselves,—on going about doing good. I have read sermons on those subjects; but I have not heard one for years. I have heard *charity* sermons as they are called, and missionary sermons, into which a remark or two on doing good were thrown; but a *sermon* on the subject I have not heard. Certain preachers talk about preaching Christ, but they preach any thing rather than Christ.

—I have just been reading a labored and foolish attempt to prove that Abel was accepted because he offered animals to God, and that Cain was rejected because he offered the fruits of the ground. There is no end to the nonsense that can be talked and written on religious subjects. Here is a man from whom one expected instruction and guidance, wasting his great powers in worse than idleness. It is a foolish and a dangerous thing to hang the doctrine of reconciliation or redemption on a slender hook, when there are strong ones plenty to hang it on. But it is not the *Christian* doctrine of redemption for which Mr. W. labors so zealously, but a theory, a crotchet, an invention of the elders. The doctrine itself requires no labored proof, no doubtful criticisms, no learned or unlearned inquiry into Greek and Hebrew etymologies. It lies on the surface of

Hosted by Google

the sacred page. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." "He died the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." "He died for all, that they who live should henceforth live not unto themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again." These theorists make Christianity disgusting by their metaphysical vanities, and their outlandish jargon. The idea that it is necessary for me to believe that Abel understood the Christian doctrine of redemption, is monstrous. There is no proof that Abel knew anything about it. The probabilities lean all the other way. It is a pity those self-satisfied theorizers have not something else to do, than to encumber religion and perplex good people by their miserable speculations.

—There's another book, one thousand two hundred and fifty pages, by a man that had real talent, and that could preach well when he took in hand practical subjects, and who had the appearance of a good man, and nine-tenths of this work of his is mischievous trifling. The clown at a theatre, the mountebank on the stage, are not so badly employed as theological triflers, who darken counsel by words without knowledge. It is not in prayer only, but in preaching and writing, that men should be in God's fear, and let their words be few.

Mr. Jones preached last night on Christ in you, the hope of glory. I can understand, 1. How Christ, in the sense of *Christianity*, or the *doctrine* of Christ, can be in us. We sometimes hear from people such expressions as: "He is full of Plato, or full of Seneca, or full of Shakespeare," when speaking of a man who has got his mind full of the sentiments of those writers. And I can understand well enough how Christianity, which brings life and immortality to light, should beget in men's minds a hope of glory. 2. I can understand how Christ, in the sense of Christ's *spirit, temper, disposition, mind,* can be in us. We sometimes say of a person who exhibits much of his father's disposition, He has got a deal of his father in him. And I can understand how Christ in us in this sense should be, or should kindle, the hope of glory. For the mind of Christ is man's fitness for

Hosted by Google

glory. The mind of Christ, and the life to which it prompts, are the things to which eternal glory is promised. But I couldn't understand Mr. Jones. Either he had no ideas on the subject, or he failed to convey them to me.

—I see no mystery in John's doctrine that God dwells in those in whom love dwells, for God is love. And I see no mystery in what Peter says about Christians being partakers of the divine nature; for the Divine nature is purity, wisdom and love. We share the common human nature and the common animal nature; that is, we have certain qualities or properties in common with men generally, and with the inferior orders of living things. So we share the divine nature, when we have the same dispositions, affections, qualities as the divine Being. And the properties of the divine being are purity, knowledge, love.

—I have just been listening to another antinomian sermon. The preacher contended that we are justified and saved solely on account of what Christ has done and suffered for us, and that the only thing we have to do, is to believe this, or trust in the merits of Christ, and be at rest as to our eternal destiny. But if we are saved *solely* on account of what Christ has done and suffered, why talk as if our *believing* this, or *trusting in Christ's* merits, was necessary to salvation? Why not go a step further and say, that neither believing nor trusting has anything to do with our salvation? But the whole theory is as anti-scriptural and false as it is foolish and mischievous. The preacher said, "We are not under the law,—Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." Very true; but we are under the Gospel; and the Gospel requires a more perfect life than the law required. The law of Christ is much stricter than the law of Moses. He said, "By the works of the law no flesh living can be justified." But we may still be justified by the works of the Gospel. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven." "By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words shalt thou be condemned." "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "Because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter

Hosted by Google

thou into the joy of thy Lord." "Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." "We have confidence in the day of judgment, because as He was so are we in this world."

He said circumcision availeth nothing; and it is true that "the circumcision which is outward in the flesh" avails nothing under the Christian dispensation: but that which is inward, namely, the putting away of all filthiness, and living a holy life, availeth much.

Then followed a lot of unscriptural and unwise talk about our own righteousness and Christ's righteousness. But the truth is, when we love God and keep His commandments,—when we love Christ and do as He bids us, and believe, in consequence, that we are approved of God, and in a fair way for heaven, we trust in *God's* righteousness, or *Christ's* righteousness, and not in a righteousness of our own. The righteousness of God means the righteousness which God *requires;* the righteousness of *Christ* means obedience to His precepts, and conformity to His mind and character. True, if I obey the Gospel, my obedience is my own, but the *law*, or the righteousness *prescribed*, is Christ's. It is when men make a law of their own,—when they set aside God's law, and put some other law in its place, and expect God's blessing in consequence of obeying that, that they trust in their *own* righteousness. And in all such cases men's own righteousness, in God's sight, is "as filthy rags." But hearty, loving obedience to God's *own* law is never regarded by Him "as filthy rags," but as a rich adorning. Real Christian goodness is, in the sight of God, "of great price."

'Than gold or pearls more precious far,
And brighter than the morning star."

Christian obedience is a sacrifice with which God is well pleased. "To do good and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." He alone trusts in the righteousness of Christ who hears Christ's words and does them,—who cultivates Christ's mind, and lives as Christ lived, and who, in doing so, expects, according to Christ's promise, God's blessing and eternal life. The idea that God looks on any persons as having lived like Christ

Hosted by Google

when they have not done so; or that He supposes any persons to be righteous, or treats them as righteous, when they are not so, is foolish and anti-scriptural in the extreme. And it is unmethodistical too. Yet here is a Methodist preacher so-called, dealing out this mischievous and miserable folly. And alas he is not alone. And these are the men who abuse others as heretics.

—The good done where preachers preach theology is not done by the preaching, I fancy, but by stray truth from the Gospels, and by the Christian lives and Christian labors of simple-minded, Bible-loving, non-theological members of the church. God bless them!

—Wesley has thirty definitions of religion, and they all mean, in substance, loving God and loving man, and living to do good. Wesley was always sensible in proportion as he got away from under the influence of the prevailing Theology.

—Some talk as if a religious education can never be the means of a child's conversion,—that, do for your children what you will, they will still, like others, require a distinct and full conversion when they come of age. I cannot see why a good Christian mother talking to her child from her old arm-chair, and praying with it as it kneels by her side, or the good example and godly training of a pious father, may not be made as effectual to the gradual conversion of a child as the preaching of a pastor from the pulpit. Nor can I see why a gradual elevation of a child to the higher spiritual life should not be as possible and as probable as the sudden elevation of a hardened and inveterate sinner. 'You cannot give your children grace,' it is said: but it is easy to answer, 'GOD can give children grace through the medium of Christian parents, as well as through public preachers and teachers.' I encourage people to bring up their children in Christian knowledge and goodness, by telling them that God may be expected to bless their labors to the sanctification and salvation of their children from their early days. Baxter used to thank God that he was led by his good parents to love God so early that he could not recollect a time when he did not love Him.

—Churches exist in this world to remind us of the eternal laws which we are bound to obey. So far as they do

Hosted by Google

this, they answer their end, and are honored in doing so. It would have been better for all of us—it would be better for us now, could churches keep this their peculiar function steadily and singly before them. Unfortunately, they have preferred in later times the speculative side of things to the practical.

—There is a tendency in men to corrupt religion; to change it from an aid and incentive to a holy life, into a contrivance to enable men to sin without fear of punishment. Obedience to God's law is dispensed with, if men will diligently profess certain opinions, or practically take part in certain rites. However scandalous the moral life, the profession of a particular belief, or attention to certain forms, at the moment of death, is held to clear the soul.

—It would be easy to give a hundred instances of doctrines to be heard in sermons and found in religious books, which are nowhere taught in Scripture. And some of them exert a mighty influence for evil on the church and the world. They check the spread of Christianity. They strengthen the cause of infidelity. They keep people away from Christ. They make an all but impassable gulf between the church and the mass of humanity.

—Some think they would not have enough to talk about if they were to give up all the doctrines or notions for which I say there is no scriptural authority. One preacher told me I had already spoiled some of his best sermons. He said he had never been able to preach them with comfort since he began to listen to my conversation. The truth is, preachers will never know what great, good things there are to be talked about, till they get rid of their foolish fancies. Nor will they know the true pleasure of talking till they come to feel that their utterances are the words of eternal truth. And so far will they be from not having enough to talk about, that if they give themselves in a Christian spirit, to study the truth as it is in Jesus, they will never have time to utter a tenth of the blessed things that will present themselves to their minds.

A hundred years would not afford me time enough to say all that I get glimpses of on religious subjects as presented in nature and in the Scriptures. Every subject I take in hand requires ten times more time to do it justice

Hosted by Google

than is generally allowed for a sermon. And the subjects are numberless. We live in an infinite universe of truth.

"I rejoice," says one, "that I have been led, in the course of God's providence, to do so much as I have done, towards purging revelation from those doctrines and practices which were discordant with its teachings, and prevented its reception with many."

Shall I ever be able to do anything in this way? God help me. If I could make the Church and the ministry more Christ-like, and more powerful for good, what a blessing it would be. What a world of work wants doing, both in the church and in the world. Save me from an impatient, pugnacious, disagreeable spirit. Perhaps I see the needs of others more than I feel my own. Perhaps I am in danger of being more eager for reform in others, than for a thoroughly Christian spirit and behavior in myself.

How many words and phrases one hears in sermons and in prayers, and what heaps of expressions one meets with in religious works, that are not warranted by Scripture or common sense!

—Some of the words and phrases that are more frequently used by Christians than any other, are unscriptural ones. Some of them express unscriptural ideas. Some of them are names of things that have no existence. Both the words and the ideas for which they stand are anti-christian. Many of the things said from the pulpit are unintelligible. The people strain their minds to get at a meaning, but to no purpose. It is Latin or Greek to them. They listen, but do not learn. They hear sounds, but catch no sense. They reverence, they worship, but they do not understand. They believe, they feel, that there are great spiritual realities, but they are not made clear to their minds. The devouter portion of the people still pray, and on the whole, live sober, righteous and godly lives; but multitudes are discouraged, and take themselves away.

"The hungry sheep look up and are not fed."

They hear words, but get no ideas. Religion does not come to them from the pulpit as a reality. It does not make itself felt as truth. Books and lecturers on science

Hosted by Google

treat of realities, and treat of them in words that can be understood; but many books on religion, and many preachers, seem to deal only in words. And the consequence is, many fancy religion is a delusion, a fanaticism, a dream. Others believe there is something in it, but they cannot conceive what it is. Yet teachers and preachers appear not properly to understand why so many get weary of sermons and religious books. Let them talk in plain good English, and say nothing but what has some great Christian reality under it, and sermons and religious books will be the most popular things on earth.

—I would never sacrifice Christian truth to conciliate the world; but I would sacrifice everything at variance with Christian truth; and I would present Christian truth itself in as intelligible and taking a form as possible.

—The antinomian theology has had a terribly corrupting effect on many members of churches. I meet proofs of it every day. God help me to do my duty. Some of my hearers say to me, 'We come to church to be comforted, and not to be continually told to do, do, do.' I do not wish people to be comforted unless they will do their duty; and they will never *lack* comfort if they *do* do it. Comfort is for those who labor to comfort and benefit others, and not for those who care only for themselves. I try to make the easy-going, indolent and selfish professors miserable: and in some cases I succeed. But I make others happy, thank God, by inducing them to give themselves heartily to Christian work.

—Here are a few more good words from Baxter: 'Many proclaim the praise of truth in general, but reject and persecute its various portions. The *name* of truth they honor, but the truth itself they despise.'

'Passion is a great seducer of the understanding, and strangely blindeth and perverteth the judgment.'

'When passion hath done boiling and the heart is cooled, and leaveth the judgment to do its work without clamor and disturbance, it is strange to see how things will appear to you to be quite of another tendency than in your frenzy you esteemed them.'

'Be more studious to hold and improve those common truths which all profess, than to oppose the particular opinions of any, except so far as those common truths require you to do so.'

Hosted by Google

'Be not borne down by the censoriousness of any, to outrun your own understanding and the truth, and to comply with them in their errors and extremes; but hold to the truth and keep your station. 'Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them.' Jer. xv. 19.'

'Believe nothing that contradicteth the end of all religion. If its tendency be against a holy life, it cannot be truth.'

'Plead not the darker texts of Scripture against those that are more plain and clear, nor a few texts against many that are as plain. That passage that is interpreted against the most plain and frequent expressions of the Scriptures is certainly misinterpreted.'

I will carry out these principles to the best of my ability.

—I notice that Christ never tells people that they cannot repent and do God's will without divine help. He did not think it necessary to supply people with excuses for their neglect of duty. And He knew that divine help is never withheld from any man. All *have* the help needed to do what God requires. There is no danger of any man trying to do anything good before he receives power from God. God is always beforehand with men.

—I have had a troubled night. I have not slept soundly for a week. I have had odd hours of sleep, but never a quarter of a night's unbroken rest. Parties will talk with me about religion, and I am foolish enough to talk with them, yet we never quite agree. They insist on the sacredness of every old notion and of every old word they have received from their teachers, and I believe in the sacredness of nothing but Scripture truth and common sense. They cannot understand me, and I cannot accept their nonsense. And they have no idea of liberty or toleration. They allow no excuse for not being sound in the faith, and no one is sound in the faith according to their notions but those who agree with them. They know nothing of the foundation on which the Connexion was built. They know nothing of Wesley: nothing, at least, of his liberal views. The fundamental principles of the Connexion justify me in my freedom of investigation, and in the sentiments which I hold and teach; but they do not know this. They know nothing but that every one is to think as they think, and talk as they talk. Hence they keep me on the rack.

Hosted by Google

I am tired. I feel sad. I could weep. I feel as if I could like to run away, like Elijah, and hide myself in the wilds of some great mountain. But no; I must stand my ground, and do my duty. Shall truth be timid, and error bold? Shall folly rage and be confident, and wisdom be afraid to whisper? Help me, O God, to do my duty as Thy servant, and as the minister of Thy Gospel.

—There are some verses of hymns that are sung in almost all religious assemblies that have nothing answering to them in Scripture. John Wesley once said, that the hymns which were the greatest favorites among the Methodists were the worst in the whole Hymn Book. It is the same still I fear, to some extent. Let those who would like to know to what words and hymns we refer, take themselves to task for a time, and demand Scriptural authority for every word and expression they utter. We would save them the trouble, were it not that we have learned that instruction from others is of no use to people who do not endeavor to teach themselves.

But take a sample or two. I cannot sing the following:

"Forbid it Lord that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ my God."

"The immortal God hath died for me," &c.

Jesus died, and God dwelt in Jesus, but God did not die. Great allowances are made to poets; but they should not be encouraged to write impossibilities.

"A heart that always feels Thy blood," &c.

I feel thankful for the love which led Jesus to die for me; but I cannot say I feel the blood. I feel the happy effects of the death or blood-shedding of Jesus; and perhaps that is what the poet means.

"When from the dust of death I rise,
To claim my mansion in the skies,
Even then this shall be all my plea,
Jesus hath lived and died for me."

Hosted by Google

This is not scriptural. The good servant in the parable of the talents says: "Lord, Thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained besides them five talents more." And so far was his Lord from finding fault with his plea, that he answered, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And why may not other faithful servants use the same plea?

John makes perfect love, or likeness to Jesus, the ground of confidence or boldness in the day of judgment. How strange that Christian writers should be so ignorant of the Bible, or so regardless of its teachings. Some of them seem to think they are saying very fine things when they are talking their anti-Christian nonsense. Help me, O God, to speak and act in accordance with Thy word.

Fine writing may be a fine thing, but true writing is a finer.

I suppose it is as hard for theologians to give up their anti-Christian words and notions as it is for drunkards to give up their drink. But it would be well for them to consider, that self-denial may be as necessary to *their* salvation, as it is to the salvation of infidels and profligates.

I would sacrifice a little poetry to truth. I would not be very particular, but do let us have substantial truth. Do not let us encumber and disfigure religion by absurdities, impossibilities, and antinomian abominations.

Some one has said, "The world is very jealous of those who assail its religious ignorance. Its old mistakes are great idols. No man has ever carried a people one march nearer the promised land without being in danger of being stoned. No man has ever purified the life of an age, without substantially laying down his own."

I am anxious only for truth and righteousness. Truth and righteousness I respect in all sects, from the Quakers to the Catholics; and I hate nonsense, and lies, and sin, in professing Christians, as much as in Turks and pagans.

So end the extracts from my Diary.

I have just been reading an article in the *Christian Advocate*, and I can't resist the temptation to give a short extract or two.

Hosted by Google

"Not only is there an emasculated theology, but there is not a little emasculated preaching.

"Nothing is emptier or feebler than cant—ringing the changes on what may be called the stock phrases of one's sect. John Wesley once said, 'Let but a pert, self-sufficient animal, that has neither sense nor grace, bawl out something about 'Christ,' or 'His blood,' or 'justification by faith,' and there are not wanting those who will cry out, 'What a fine Gospel sermon!' For myself, I prefer a sermon on either good tempers or good works to such 'Gospel sermons.'

"Take away from certain preachers their 'heavenly tone,' as the old lady called it—their sing-song cadences, and their favorite pulpit phrases—and you take away the principal part of their stock in trade. Out upon such 'words without knowledge'—sound without sense!

"Quite as destitute of Gospel power is that preaching which consists largely in the presentation of old worn-out theories, musty scholastic philosophies about religion, usually paraded under the pretentious title of 'doctrine.'

"The devil, it is said, once inspired a dead priest to preach an orthodox sermon. On being questioned by his imps why he ventured on such a deliverance, he replied very significantly, that nothing made infidels more effectually than orthodoxy preached by dead men's lips."

CHAPTER X.

THE REFORMING TENDENCY.

I HAD a third tendency which helped to get me into trouble; namely, a reforming tendency. Earnest and active-minded young men are generally reformers. In me the reforming tendency was unusually strong. I wanted to reform everybody and everything, and to do it thoroughly, and without delay. And I commenced operations very early.

1. It was the custom of my class-leader to read over to his class once a quarter the rules of society, and to request the

Hosted by Google

members, if they were aware of any breach of any of the rules by any of the members, to name the matter as he proceeded. Now one of the rules forbade the putting on of gold or costly apparel; yet several of the members of our class put on both. So when he came to that rule, I asked why it was not enforced. The leader seemed confused. One of the offenders was the wife of one of the travelling preachers, and another was the wife of an influential layman, and both were customers at his store, and he had never entertained a thought, I imagine, of running the risk of offending them by rebuking them for their offences; so he muttered something in the way of excuse and then passed on. The truth was, that the rule, though copied from the New Testament, and regarded by Mr. Wesley as of great importance, was no longer considered binding either by the preachers or the leading members. The reading of the rules in the class was merely a form, and my remarks, instead of inducing my offending class-mates to return to the old Methodist custom, only caused them and those who sided with them, to look on me as a troubler of Israel.

2. I got myself into a little trouble on a later occasion at a local preachers' meeting. It was the custom at those meetings for the superintendent preacher to read over the names of the local preachers, and to request any brother who knew of any breach of rule by any of his brethren, to name the matter. When the name of Mr. H. was read over, I stated that he had been guilty of evil speaking against one of his brethren. I gave the particulars, and the offence was acknowledged, but the offending brother was not without excuse, and the business of the meeting proceeded. But there was a very strong feeling in the minds of many that such attempts as I was making to press neglected rules on the attention of the meeting, ought not to be encouraged; and my endeavors to enforce consistency brought down upon me many sharp rebukes.

3. Among the books that I read in those early days was *Mason on Self-knowledge*. I found some excellent remarks on temperance and frugality in this work. I met with some similar remarks in translating portions of the writings of Seneca and Cicero. In a conversation that I had with one of the travelling preachers, and a person that was sup-

Hosted by Google

plying the place of another travelling preacher, I quoted the beautiful sentiments which I had been reading and translating, and added some remarks of my own, with a view to recommend attention to the lessons they inculcated. The travelling preacher remained silent, but his companion answered me with a scornful laugh, and said, there was no need to urge such matters on them, for they had not the *means* to be anything else but frugal and temperate. This was neither true nor courteous, and though I made no answer, it left an impression on my mind by no means favorable to the wisdom and piety of those who, at that time, were placed over me as my teachers and guides.

4. Though I met with such poor encouragement in my early efforts to reform or check abuses among my brethren, I still persisted in my course, even after I became a travelling preacher. It was the custom of the richer members of society to have large parties, to which they invited each other and the preachers and their families. At many of these parties there was a good deal of drinking, and a serious waste of money on many things that were not only useless but injurious. And each family tried to outdo the rest in the costliness of their parties. I regarded this custom as anti-Christian, and tried to get it changed for something better. I thought the money wasted on drink and hurtful luxuries would be better spent in doing good. In some cases I referred to the words of Christ about making feasts, recorded in Luke xiv. 12–14; but no one seemed to think Christ's rule to be binding on professing Christians now. Even my brother ministers thought me needlessly particular, and helped to render my efforts for reform both unsuccessful, and productive of disagreeable results.

5. The custom of treating the rich who came to our chapels with more respect than the poor, was as prevalent probably when I became a minister, as it was in the days of James. I often saw the officials of the church conducting gaily-dressed people to comfortable pews, while they left such as were poorly clad to stand in the aisles, or to find their way into seats themselves; and on some occasions I showed my dissatisfaction with such proceedings.

6. It was customary to have society meetings in each place once a quarter, and at these meetings I used to refer to

Hosted by Google

what I thought amiss in the conduct of professors, and to urge attention to such lessons of Christ and His Apostles as seemed to be generally overlooked or forgotten. On some occasions too on week nights, instead of preaching a regular sermon, I used to give a kind of lecture or exhortation, in which I presented a summary of neglected duties, and read over the passages of Scripture in which they were enjoined, making remarks on them. There were many matters pertaining to marriage, to the education and government of children, and to domestic duties generally; and there were matters pertaining to trade, to social intercourse, to mental improvement, and the like, on which preachers, as a rule, were entirely silent in their sermons, from the beginning of the year to the end. Yet many of these matters were of the utmost importance, and for want of information on them many religious people were neither so happy themselves, nor so useful to others, as they ought to be. On these matters I spoke in as plain and faithful a way as possible. I cautioned the young against wasting their time, advised them to spend their leisure hours in reading and writing, told them what books to read, and how to read them, showed them the most profitable plan of reading the Bible, warned them against bad company, and advised them not to spend too much time even in good company. I urged them, if they thought of being preachers, to endeavor to be preachers of the highest order, workmen that needed not to be ashamed, rightly distributing the word of truth. And whether they thought of being preachers or not, I urged them to improve their talents, and to become as wise, as able and as useful as possible. Many were delighted, and reduced my lessons to practice. Others however took offence, and repaid my endeavors to do them good with uncharitable censures.

7. It was the custom in the Body to which I belonged to keep the doors of the annual conference closed against all but those who were sent as delegates by the circuits. I and a few others thought this course led to inconsiderate, and, in some cases, to unjust and oppressive measures, and in 1835 I wrote a letter on the subject to the *Christian Advocate*. My remarks were not agreeable to the leading members of conference, and I was instantly called to account and

Hosted by Google

severely censured, and threatened with the heaviest punishment if ever I offended so grievously again. The reason why my letter proved so offensive was probably its truthfulness, for the change I recommended was afterwards adopted, though not till the old objectionable system had produced most disastrous consequences.

8. One rule of the Connexion to which I belonged forbade the preachers to marry till after they had been engaged in the ministry from four to five years or upwards. This regulation seemed to me to be the cause of serious evils. Some of these evils I had myself experienced, and others I had seen in the conduct and mishaps of many of my brethren. The reason assigned for the law seemed to me to be not only insufficient, but to be a disgrace to a body of Christians situated as *we* were. I urged an alteration or a repeal of the law, recommending conference to take out the best and ablest men as ministers, whether they were married or not, and to allow such ministers as were single to marry whenever they thought fit, and to urge the churches to provide for the additional expense of married preachers by a little additional liberality. There were members that wasted as much on one foolish and mischievous party, as would have made up the difference between a single man's salary and a married man's salary. There were members that spent as much in intoxicating drinks as would have kept a married preacher or two out and out. There were tradesmen that could have supported five or six preachers out of their yearly profits, if they had been as liberal as the old selfish Jews were required to be. If they had been as liberal as *Christians* are required to be,—if they had loved their neighbors, or Jesus, or God, as they loved themselves, they could have supported twenty preachers, and still retained enough to keep their families in comfort and plenty, and to carry on and extend their businesses too. To shut good men out of the ministry because they were married, and take in doubtful men because they were single, was, in my view, disgraceful and inexcusable. But in this also I was considered wrong by the rulers of the Connexion, and was once more censured and admonished for what was considered my presumptuous interference.

9. Fifty years ago, and for some years after, almost every-

Hosted by Google

body used to drink intoxicating drinks. Ale and beer, wine and spirits, were as freely used as tea and coffee, and were taken in great quantities by many even in the church and ministry. I remember once, while yet a local preacher, going round with Mr. Etchells, a new minister in my native town, on his first pastoral visits, to show him where the principal members of the church lived. He was invited to drink at every house, and never failed to comply with the invitations. I saw him drink sixteen glasses of beer, wine and spirits, on that one round, occupying only two or three hours. This same minister prosecuted Mr. Farrar, his superintendent, for drunkenness, and got him suspended. Whether his superintendent drank more than he or not, I do not know, but he did not keep up appearances so well. He showed himself drunk in the pulpit,—so drunk, on one or two occasions, that he was unable to speak plainly, or even to stand steadily. He also fell down in the streets sometimes, and had to be carried home. His colleague did not commit himself in such ways, though he drank enough at times in one day to make half a dozen sober people drunk.

The leading member in the Methodist church, Richard Wilson, opened the first wine and spirit store at Bramley, and corrupted the whole country round with his wares, doing far more for the devil and sin than the preachers could do for God and holiness. Yet no one seemed to think there was anything dishonorable or diabolical in the business.

At a social party to which I was invited at Leeds, consisting of preachers and leading members of the church, one man, a preacher, got so drunk, that he became a most distressing spectacle. I cannot describe his mishaps. There were others who ought to have committed themselves in the same sad way, for they drank as much, and even more, but they had stronger constitutions, or were better seasoned.

At Liverpool, my first station, every one on whom the preachers called in their pastoral rounds, asked them to drink. Even Dr. Raffles, the popular Congregational minister, had wine and cakes brought out, when I and my superintendent called on him one morning. Wine and cakes, or cakes and spirits, were placed on the table by all who were not too poor to buy such things, and

Hosted by Google

even the poorer members contrived to supply themselves with rum or whisky. And all expected the preachers to drink. And the preachers did drink. Mr. Allin, my superintendent, was not by far the greatest drinker in the Connexion, yet he seldom allowed the poison placed before him to remain untasted. I was so organized, that I never could drink a full glass of either wine or ale without feeling more or less intoxicated, and for spirits I had quite a distaste; so that I was obliged to take intoxicating drinks very sparingly. Yet I conformed, to some extent, to the prevailing custom; and it was not, I fear, through any great goodness of my own, that I did not become a drunkard. Several of my fellow-ministers became drunkards. Mr. Allin himself, after he fell under the influence of that bad rich man at Sheffield became a drunkard, and brought on shocks of paralysis by his excesses. My superintendent at Sheffield drank himself into *delirium tremens*, and I fear he never got over his bad habits. Mr. Chapman was a notorious sot. I knew him personally, and was compelled, at times, to witness his disgusting habits. Yet he was never expelled, though he was superannuated some forty years or more before his death. His superannuation reduced his income some seventy-five per cent., and made it impossible for him to drink so freely as he had been wont, and so, very probably, helped to prolong his miserable life.

While stationed at Liverpool, I was called away to supply the place of the superintendent preacher in the Chester circuit for a few weeks, who had died very suddenly, under very peculiar circumstances. His name was Dunkerley. I was told by persons likely to know the truth, that he was a very drunken man. On one occasion, while he was over at Liverpool, he fell down in the Theatre Square, and had to be taken up and carried into a neighboring shop. At first it was supposed he had had a fit; but a little further attention to the case revealed the secret that he was drunk. On another occasion, on his return from Liverpool to Chester, he was observed, when he got off the coach, to stagger backwards and fall down. Some friends that were waiting for his arrival, ran and helped him up, and took him to a member's house just by. He was found to be drunk then also. The members spoke to him on the subject, and reproved

Hosted by Google

him sharply, and then put him to bed. The Tuesday night following, the matter was mentioned at the leaders' meeting, when he was present. The leaders told him that such conduct could not be tolerated, and that unless a change took place for the better, the matter would have to be laid before the Quarterly Meeting. The preacher acknowledged his fault, and promised, if they would forgive him that once, that he would do so no more. I believe that from that time he gave up the use of intoxicating drinks for a week or two; but shortly after, having to go to the Welsh side of the Circuit, he began to use them again. At one of the places on that side of the Circuit, the leaders were accustomed to have their meetings in a room in a public-house, near the Chapel, and to lodge the preacher there. Perhaps poor Dunkerley thought it would hardly look right for him to be accommodated at a public-house with a bed, and yet take nothing to drink; so he got some gin. The relish for the gin must have returned upon him with great power when he began to taste it, for he drank very freely. He drank so much, that the publican himself began to feel alarmed for him. A short time after he had gone up stairs to bed, the people of the house heard a noise of an unusual character in his room, and on going to see what was the matter, they found the preacher on his knees, in an apoplectic fit, the blood gushing from his nose and ears. He died the same evening. He died drunk.

It was this man's place that I went to supply. I do not wonder now that Dunkerley and several other preachers in the New Connexion were drunkards, when I take into consideration the customs and habits of the people of the Connexion in those days. I never met with anything in any society, that I recollect, more at variance with the principles of Christian temperance, and more likely to lead both preachers and people into drunkenness and profligacy, than the habits and customs of many of the members of the New Connexion in the Chester circuit. In the first place they were all users of intoxicating drinks, and all those that were in tolerable circumstances regularly kept spirits as well as milder, weaker kinds of intoxicating drinks in their houses. In the next place a preacher could never call at the houses of those people, whatever the time of day, without being

Hosted by Google

urged to drink of either the stronger or weaker kinds of intoxicating drinks. And he could hardly refuse to drink without seeming to slight the kindness of the people, and running the risk of giving offence. In the third place they were very much addicted to extravagant social parties, pleasure jaunts, &c. They were worse than the people of Leeds in this respect; unless they were worse than usual while I was there. All the time that I was in Chester, there was not a single week or day when they had not either some dinner-party or tea-party, or both, or else some pleasure jaunt on the water or on land. And those pleasure parties and feasts were always occasions of extravagant eating and drinking. Besides abundance of flesh and game, and other luxuries, there was always an overwhelming supply of intoxicating drinks, and great quantities were consumed. I have seen men on those occasions drink five, six, eight, or even ten glasses of wine or spirits, besides drinking ale, or porter, or wine at meals. I recollect very distinctly seeing a person, and that a preacher, drink, in addition to what he consumed over his meal, ten glasses of Port wine between dinner and tea, after which he went to preach.

Religious society was not quite so corrupt in the principal towns of the Hanley circuit, where I was next stationed, as at Liverpool and Chester, yet there was a fearful amount of respectable intemperance there. There was no end to the feasting. And as I, though so young, was very popular, I was always expected to be present. The luxuries in which I indulged brought on indigestion. Indigestion, and close study, and hard work in the pulpit, brought on a most wearisome languor and depression. To help me, one rich friend sent me a bottle of Sherry wine. Another sent me Elderberry wine. These made me worse. It was well this mistaken kindness did not ruin me. But I was preserved, thank God, both from death and drunkenness.

For two years more I was in the midst of these awful temptations to intemperance, and a witness to their deadly effects on several of my brethren. I felt that I was in danger. And I saw that the church was suffering. I looked round for a remedy.

Just then there came rumors of a temperance society, and of attempts at a temperance reformation. One of our young

Hosted by Google

preachers had joined this new society, and had labelled his whisky and brandy *medicine*. He left his beer, and porter, and wine, *un*labelled, and drank them as freely as before. The people who told me of this, ridiculed the man, and ridiculed the movement for temperance reform. I was rather pleased with the news, though news of a more thorough movement might have pleased me better. But the beginnings of things are small. The movement soon became radical enough, and I kept pace with it.

In 1832 I gave up the use of ardent spirits, and became a member of the old-fashioned temperance society. In 1833 I gave up the use of intoxicating drinks of all kinds, and joined the teetotal society. In 1834 I gave up the use of tobacco. A few months later I gave up tea and coffee, and took water as my usual drink.

These changes in my way of life gave great offence to many in the church to which I belonged, and led them to speak of me, and act towards me, in a way that was anything but kind and agreeable. This was especially the case with regard to my disuse of intoxicating drinks, and my advocacy of teetotalism. I might have been borne with perhaps if I had become a drunkard; for drunkards were in some cases tolerated; but a teetotaler was not to be endured. Some called me a fool, and some a madman, and one man pronounced me no better than a suicide and a murderer. "You will be dead," said he, "in twelve months, if you persist in your miserable course, and what will become of your wife and children? And what account can you give of the people you are leading to untimely death by your example?" One person at Chester, at whose house I had visited some years before, when supplying the place of the deceased minister, would neither invite me to his house, nor speak to me in the street, except in the way of insult, now that I had become a teetotaler. He said no one should ever sit at his table who would not take a glass of wine. And I never did sit at his table after. He invited my colleagues, and he invited the old superannuated minister, whose character I cannot describe, but he never invited me.

One object that I had in view in adopting my abstemious way of life was to save a little money to buy books. I had be-

Hosted by Google

come an author too, and had thoughts of publishing a number of works, and I wanted to be able to do so without having to go into debt. Then I wanted to do good in other ways. I liked to be able to give a little to the distressed and needy that I was called upon to visit. And I liked to subscribe occasionally to funds for the erection of new schools and chapels in circuits where I was stationed. Among my reasons for becoming a teetotaler was a desire to induce others to do so, who seemed to me to be likely, if they continued to use intoxicating drinks, to become drunkards. Then I had seen the terrible effects of the drinking system, both in the Church and among my relations. And I was anxious for the success of every kind of measure that seemed likely to promote the reformation and salvation of mankind.

10. I had not been a teetotaler long before I became anxious to see my brethren in the ministry teetotalers. I wrote a letter to the *Temperance Advocate*, giving an account of the experiment I had made, and stating the happy results by which it had been followed, and urging others, by all the considerations that had influenced my own mind, to adopt and advocate the teetotal principle. Mr. Livesey sent a copy of the *Advocate* containing my letter to all the ministers of the Body to which I belonged. There were but few of them however who seemed to be able to enter into my views and feelings, or to understand and appreciate the motives by which I was actuated. The generality looked on the course I had taken as a proof of a restless and ill-regulated mind, and instead of following my example, treated me and my teetotalism with ridicule. Some were angry, and scolded me in right good earnest. They supposed that it was *I* that had sent them the Paper containing my letter, and seemed to think themselves called upon to resent my interference with their tastes and habits in a very decided manner. Several of them sent me very offensive letters, and one of them concluded a long outpouring of abuse and insolence with some very cutting but just remarks on my inconsistency in pressing abstinence from intoxicating drinks so earnestly on others, while I myself was guilty of the unreasonable and offensive practice of smoking tobacco.

Hosted by Google

I had long had misgivings as to the propriety of smoking, and when I read this cutting rebuke, I resolved to smoke no more. I said to my wife, "They shall not be able to charge me with inconsistency again on that score," and I there and then broke my pipe on the grate, and emptied my tobacco cup into the fire, and I have never annoyed others, or defiled myself, with the abomination of tobacco smoke or tobacco spittle from that day to this. My angry correspondent had done me an important service.

11. I met with some of the bitterest and most persistent enemies of teetotalism in the circuit in which I was then travelling. There were several members of society, class-leaders, and local preachers, in and around Chester, who were slaves to intoxicating drinks. Some of them were habitual drunkards, and others of them were not much better; and they treated all who would not countenance their excesses as personal enemies. Many of them were accustomed to go to public houses, and sit there drinking and smoking for hours together, like ordinary drunkards. This horrible habit they gave up shortly after my appointment to the circuit, but several of them raged against me with tremendous fury, and would have done anything to destroy my influence. At first they were kept in check to some extent by the wisdom and goodness of my superintendent, who, though he did not become a teetotaler himself, showed great respect for those who did. When he left Chester, a man of a very different character came in his place, who sided with the drinkers, and took a savage delight in annoying the teetotalers, and exulted as if he had achieved some wonder of benevolence and piety when he had induced some poor reformed drunkard to break his pledge, though he plunged again into the horrors of intemperance. I called one forenoon on Mr. Downs. He was frantic, and his wife was wild with anxiety and terror. She seemed as if she had been awake and weeping all the night. I soon saw the cause of the dreadful spectacle. Downs had been a drunkard, but had, under my influence, become a teetotaler, and joined the church. His wife had been a member of the church for some years. She was overjoyed with the reformation and conversion of her husband, and was promising for herself and her husband, for the future,

Hosted by Google

a very happy life. My superintendent had got poor Downs into his company, and by reasoning, ridicule, and coaxing, had induced him to take a glass of ale. His horrible appetite for intoxicating drink returned with irresistible force, and he drank himself drunk. He went home in a very deplorable condition. His wife, distressed beyond measure, got him to bed, and he fell asleep, and she, poor woman, sat watching him, and weeping, hoping he might wake to lament his error and become again a sober man. He awoke in a fury, and attempted to destroy himself. He was mad with shame and horror, and declared he could not and would not live. When I entered, his wife had been watching him and struggling with him for several hours, to keep him from suicide. I just got in in time to save the man, and relieve his exhausted wife, and I was enabled to reconcile the man to live a little longer, and try teetotalism again. My misguided superintendent never attempted to reason with me, but when he thought he had a chance of punishing me for my teetotalism, he snatched at the apparent opportunity with the greatest eagerness.

One week night, when appointed to preach in Chester Chapel, I gave the people a sermon on temperance. Some days after, I was summoned to a meeting of officials, to give an account of my doings. I attended. My superintendent, the bitter enemy of teetotalism, was in the chair, and on each side of him sat a number of men of similar feelings, and of grosser habits. I was told there was a complaint against me, to the effect that the last time I was at Chester I had preached teetotalism instead of the Gospel. I said, "Is that all?" And they answered "Yes." "Then you ought to be ashamed of yourselves," I said, and left the meeting. What they did after my departure I was never told.

One man in that neighborhood circulated a report that I had asked my mother-in-law, who had been staying some time at our house, to have a glass of brandy and water, when she was leaving for home in the coach. This slander was refuted by a deputation, who at once visited my mother-in-law, and brought back from her a flat contradiction of the statement.

I ought to say, that while I was in this circuit, hun-

Hosted by Google

dreds of drunkards were reformed, many of whom became happy, exemplary, and useful members of the Church. I was the means of tens of thousands becoming teetotalers in the country round about, and the happy effects of my labors in those regions remain, to some extent, to the present day.

12. In 1837, while I was stationed in the Mossley Circuit, I began a weekly periodical called the *Evangelical Reformer*. I had long wished for a suitable means of laying my views before my friends, but had found none. The editor of the magazine published by the Body to which I belonged was a very disagreeable man, and to me he was more unaccommodating and offensive than to others. He would have published articles under my name, but not till he had altered them, and made them conformable to his own ideas and tastes. And this was more than I could endure. There was another periodical which I could use, and had used occasionally, but it lent itself to ill-disposed people as a vehicle of slander, and I had ceased to feel myself at liberty to give it my countenance. With a small periodical of my own I could communicate with my friends at pleasure, and I used my *Evangelical Reformer* for this purpose with great freedom. I published my views on temperance, on marriage, on trade, on education, on dress, on diet, on religious parties, on books and reading, on the use of money, on the duty of the Church to support its poor members, on toleration and human creeds, and on a multitude of other subjects, and urged on the churches a reform on all these points. My freedom of expression soon brought me into fresh trouble. An article which I published on "Toleration and Human Creeds," was considered by some of my brethren to be highly objectionable and dangerous, and was brought before Conference. Conference was pressed by many to condemn the article, and to show its disapprobation of it by punishing the author. Others entreated that Conference should spare the author, lest mischief should follow, and content itself with privately expressing disapprobation of the article. The latter parties prevailed; but their moderation was made of no effect by the editor of the magazine who wickedly published the obnoxious resolution to the world, and so rendered it necessary for me to write again on the subject, to defend

Hosted by Google

myself and my article. The result was a controversy between me and some of my brethren, which led at length to the most serious consequences.

Another article was objected to by many of my brother ministers. A draper, a leading member of the society at Ashton, published a circular, announcing the winter fashions, and sent copies to members of my congregation, pressing them to go and purchase his wares, many of which were both costly and useless. I copied this circular into my periodical, and advised my readers to disregard its counsels, and to spend their money like Christians. I added some remarks on the inconsistency of professing Christians urging people, even in the way of trade, to waste their Master's money on things forbidden by His word. This article created a great amount of excitement, and some would fain have had it censured by Conference, along with the other article; but they were not allowed to have their way.

Both my periodical and my other publications were favorably received, and had a large circulation, and my opponents thought they gave me too much power, and made me dangerous; and this became the occasion of further unpleasantness. On the other hand the magazine had but a poor circulation, and the Book-room, though it had a large amount of capital, did but a very limited business; and I suggested reforms with a view to render them more useful. I urged an improvement of the magazine, and the publication of cheap books, with a view to supply useful reading to the members of the churches, and to people generally. All these propositions proved unpalatable to the easy-going officials, and brought on me fresh trials.

13. Again; the standard of morality was low in many of our societies, and I pleaded for the enforcement of Christian discipline. Some of our members were brewers, some publicans, some spirit-merchants, some beer-shop keepers. Old Mr. Thwaites was a publican. His son, who was both class-leader and local preacher, was both a drink-seller and a pawnbroker. And I am not certain that pawnbroking in England is not as bad a business as drink-selling. The two are nearly related and are fast friends. Drunkenness leads to pawnbroking, and pawnbroking helps drunkenness. Timothy Bentley, one of the greatest brewers in England,

Hosted by Google

the poisoner-general both of the souls and bodies of the immense population of my native county, was a Methodist class-leader at Huddersfield. I once met in his class. He was a most venerable and saintly-looking man, and stood in high repute. I regarded these businesses as anti-christian, and contended that those who persisted in them after due admonition, should be expelled.

The businesses named above were not the worst. Some members of society were wholesale panders. Take the following facts. When I was sent to Liverpool I had a young man, whose name I need not give, for a bed-fellow. He was a draper, and his customers were unfortunate women. He sold to them on trust, and went round weekly to collect his money. His father, who was a leading man in the society, and his brothers, were in the same way of business. Another man who was a leading member and an official, followed the same dishonorable occupation. It was usual with those people, when their wretched customers were turned out of their houses by their landlords, to provide them with fresh houses, and even to supply them with furniture. When fairs or races were at hand, they supplied them with extra dresses and ornaments, to enable them to ply their horrible trade to better advantage. These facts I had in part from my bed-fellow, and in part from the people in whose house he kept his shop, and with whom I lived. When I came to know these things I was very uneasy; and on finding that it was unsafe to sleep with my bed-fellow, I got fresh lodgings. This vexed my bed-fellow and all his family, and made them my enemies. I spoke of these things to my superintendent, but he advised me to be cautious what I did and said in reference to such matters. And he told me a story that he had met with in a work on the ministry by an American, which he had just been reading. This author said, that out of fifty ministers whom he had known expelled from their holy office, only one or two had been expelled for immoral conduct or gross inconsistency: all the rest had been discarded on account of imprudences. This was meant to deter me from interfering either by word or deed with faulty members of society. And he backed his ungodly counsel by as bad an example. For he not only left those wicked people to pursue their evil courses

Hosted by Google

undisturbed, but visited at their houses, allowed his family to receive presents from them, and, when he was leaving the circuit, did himself accept from their unclean hands a portion of their filthy gains, in the shape of a testimonial of their respect for his great abilities and distinguished virtues. This person, whose general conduct was much in keeping with the facts I have given above, though he was the foremost minister in the Connexion, proved my most persistent adversary in after life, and never rested till he had brought about my expulsion from the ministry.

14. I will mention another affair to show what notions certain members of the church had of what was required of Christians in reference to business matters. I bought some handkerchiefs of a man, a member of society, in Chester, on his assurance that they would wash. When we washed them they came to pieces. I asked the man afterwards if he was aware when he sold the handkerchiefs that they were rotten. He said he was. "Then why did you sell me them?" I asked. He said he had bought them for good ones himself, and that he could not afford to lose what he had given for them. I wanted such people to be dealt with according to the rules of Christian discipline.

15. There were many other sad facts, far more than I have either time or disposition to mention, which forced themselves on my notice, and obliged me, in conscience, to plead and labor for reform. There seemed a dreadful distance between the character of Christ and the character of the Church; and I wished to make it less. How far I erred in my efforts to bring about this desirable result, and how far I acted wisely, it is not for me to say. I know that my object was good, and that the course I took was the one that seemed best to me at the time; but it is probable that some would have gone about the work in a wiser way. I never excelled in certain forms of prudence. I was prone to speak forth my thoughts and feelings without much consideration and with but little reserve; and I often used the plainest and even the strongest words. I was too open. My heart was too near my mouth. I thought aloud. And I was not sufficiently tender of people's feelings. Nor did I make sufficient allowance for their prejudices and imperfections. I probably expected too much from men. And

Hosted by Google

some of the reforms which I proposed might at the time be impracticable. I was accustomed to muse very much on the teachings of Christ and His Apostles, and to image to myself a state of things in the Church which, though very desirable, was probably unattainable, except through many slow preliminary changes. I wished for a church "without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,"—a church that should set forth and carry out the highest principles of Christian purity and charity—and that was a blessing to be looked for not in the present, but in the future only.

16. Then I had but little knowledge of human nature, either in its regenerate or unregenerate state. I over-rated men's virtues, and under-rated their defects. I trusted them too much and feared them too little. I took all who put on a fair appearance, for friends, and imparted to them the innermost thoughts of my soul. And many proved unworthy of my confidence. And I often over-rated men's talents or capabilities. I was not aware of the infinite difference in men's powers. I thought all my brethren in the ministry, and almost all my brother Christians, were capable, under proper culture, of being made as wise, as able, as eloquent, as the most distinguished in the Church. I was not aware that some men were naturally palm-trees, and others only brambles; that some were pearls, and others only pebbles; and that these constitutional differences were unalterable. Hence I expected too much of some, and was too impatient perhaps when disappointed. I erred with regard both to men and institutions, and my colleagues were often offended with what they deemed my unreasonable expectations and demands.

17. But in truth, it is not necessary for reformers to err, in order to give offence. The best and wisest One that ever appeared on earth gave offence to those who were wedded to error and abuses. A Christian reformer can never please the "earthly, the sensual, and the devilish." The history of Christ and of Paul has settled that. A Christian reformer never does the right thing in the estimation of the idle, the selfish, the corrupt: and if he does, he never does it at the right time, or in the right way. He always meddles too early, or too late; and he always goes too fast, or too slow; and he always does too much, or too little. He

Hosted by Google

interferes with their ease, their interests, and their pleasures, and that is enough. They will, in return, endeavor to destroy his influence, if not to take away his life. They will impute to him the vilest motives. They will stick at no lie, no wrong, that seems likely to damage his reputation. They will magnify his innocent weaknesses or trifling inconsistencies, and represent them as gross and unpardonable faults. If he is faithful they will call him rash; if he is prudent they will call him hypocritical; and they will labor in every way to awaken against him distrust and prejudice in the minds of the better-disposed among their brethren.

And many of the better-disposed themselves often see what tries them greatly in the character and doings of reformers. It is the natural tendency of the reforming spirit to lead a man to look too much at what is amiss in men and systems, and too little at what is right and praiseworthy. It is what is amiss that *wants* reforming, so he fixes his mind on that, and makes it the constant subject of his conversation. And so it was with myself no doubt to some extent. And this, to men of conservative tendencies, who look more at the good and less at the evil in the men and systems with which they are connected, seems a grievous fault, an inexcusable piece of injustice, deserving the severest censure. And they repay it with the sternest condemnation.

And conservatives can be as blind or one-sided as the most eager reformers. They can shut their eyes to what is evil, or treat great abuses as excusable trifles; while they magnify what is good beyond all bounds. And when they get excited or vexed they can be as unjust towards the reformer, as the most rabid reformer can be towards them or their pet institutions. And there are few things fiercer than the fire of bigotry, even in minds not destitute of piety. The truth is, when men wax hot, either in favor of reform or against it, justice is forgotten, and kindness and courtesy are out of the question.

And so it was in the controversies which arose out of my efforts at reform. I was assailed both by the malignity of the corrupt, and by the bigotry of the misguided. I was hated by the bad, and dreaded by some of the good, and

Hosted by Google

abused and persecuted by both. And some of my enemies had neither mercy nor moderation. They pressed matters to the most terrible extremes.

And I was not sufficiently on my guard. Instead of possessing my soul in patience, and casting my care on God, I allowed their persecutions to increase the bitterness of my unhappy feelings, and render my ultimate separation from them inevitable.

18. There were several other matters which had something to do in causing unpleasant feelings between me and a number of my brethren.

It fell to my lot to be unusually popular. I became so at a very early period. I was, in consequence, often invited by other circuits to preach their special sermons, and I frequently accepted those invitations. Some of my superintendents were annoyed at this, and showed their displeasure in very offensive ways. While I was in Hanley circuit my superintendent called a meeting of a number of leading friends, before which I was summoned to appear. There my acceptance of invitations to preach occasional sermons was charged against me as an offence, and I was ordered not to go into other circuits any more, without the consent of my superintendent. I offered no objection to this. My superintendent next charged me with having a number of objectionable books in my library. He had requested the woman at whose house I lodged to show him into my room during my absence, and there he had found the works of Shakespeare, Barrow, Tillotson, and Paley, and some volumes of poems by Lord Byron. The meeting advised me to get rid of Shakespeare and Byron, and to be careful how I used the works of Barrow, Tillotson, and Paley, as they were not Methodistical, and my great concern, it was said, should be to excel as a teacher and defender of Methodism. With this recommendation I could not entirely comply. I retained my Shakespeare; I have him yet. And I read the works of Tillotson, Barrow, and Paley as freely as I had done before. But I lost all confidence in my superintendent, and a portion of the respect I had felt for those who took his part. Towards the close of the year my superintendent and his friends endeavored to prevent me from receiving a perfect certificate, on the pretence that I had ex-

Hosted by Google

pressed a doubt whether my health would prove equal to the work of the ministry. Their objections proved of no avail; but the spirit which my superintendent showed, increased the unhappy feeling which his previous unkindness had awakened in my breast.

19. The wife of one of our ministers published a book, and the husband sent it to me for review. It contained, mixed up with a great variety of useful remarks, a number of anti-scriptural and antinomian passages. While I did justice to the rest of the book, I exposed its errors with great fidelity, and gave the husband great offence.

20. About the same time a gentleman at whose house I was billeted at Bury, when lecturing there on temperance, made me a present of a volume of Channing's discourses. I read this volume with the greatest delight, and spoke of it highly in my periodical. Now Channing was a Unitarian, and in one of the discourses contained in the volume which I had commended, there were several Unitarian expressions. The husband of the lady whose book I had reviewed brought the matter before Conference. He also quoted from my periodical a number of passages which he contended were not Methodistical. He was very violent in his remarks, and concluded his address by demanding my expulsion. He had conferred with a number of other preachers before Conference came on, and formed a considerable party, and the clamor for my condemnation was both loud and somewhat general. A gentleman, however, of great influence in Conference,—the same who had pleaded for moderation at the Conference previous,—rose and proposed a gentler course. The result was a committee, explanations and a settlement. After the Conference, the terms of the settlement were misrepresented by my opponents, and I felt called upon to put them in their proper light. This revived the controversy, and made matters worse than they had been before.

21. I have referred to the rule which required young preachers to remain single for four or five years. When a person was received into the ministry, he was required to give a pledge that he would keep this rule. I declined to give this pledge. I said I had no *intention* to marry before the appointed time, and that if I *did* so, I should be

Hosted by Google

in the hands of the Conference, and they could do with me what they thought best. This was considered sufficient, and I was accepted. As it happened I *did* marry before the appointed time. I had had such unsuitable lodgings found me where I had been stationed, and I had suffered so much in consequence, that I felt justified in taking a wife and providing accommodations for myself. I took for my wife a woman of exemplary character, of amiable disposition, and engaging manners, and I put the circuits in which I was stationed to no additional expense or trouble. I took my own house, and provided my own furniture. And I neither begged nor borrowed a penny, nor did I run one penny into debt. And I worked as hard after marriage as before, and probably harder, and to better purpose. The Conference however punished me by putting me a year back, and transporting me to the most distant part of a very distant circuit. Thither I had to remove my wife and furniture at great expense. And the allowance for board there was the lowest that the laws allowed a society to give. My whole yearly income was only forty pounds, or two hundred dollars. I was required too to be often and long from home in distant parts of the circuit I went however to my appointment and set to work, disposed, though sorrowful, to do my duty. I got a part of an old uninhabited house, and my wife made it comfortable. We lived economically, and kept out of debt, without the aid of either gifts or loans, and I never had a happier year, and my labors were never better received or more successful; and Blyth, the place of my banishment, will be dear to me as long as I live.

22. Yet I had many trials while stationed there. My superintendent was unkind, and tried from time to time to do me harm. But though he caused me much trouble at times, a higher power overruled things for my good. One of the societies over which he had great influence was really cruel. It refused to postpone a service to allow me to go and see my child when it was very ill, and thought to be in great danger. The circuit was nearly thirty miles in length, and I had to spend nearly half my time from fifteen to twenty-three miles away from home. Once when starting for the most distant of my appointments, I had

Hosted by Google

left my little child very unwell, and apparently in danger of death. It was too bad that I should have had to leave my little family under such circumstances; but the feeling in many parts of the circuit was so unfriendly towards me, in consequence of the unfavorable representations of my views and habits of thought circulated by my superintendent and his friends, that I could not have missed an appointment with safety. I had been away five days, when I heard that my child was worse, and likely to die. I had still one appointment to fulfil, but I resolved, if possible, to get it postponed, and hasten home. I went to the place and requested the leaders to allow me to put off the appointment to the following week. They refused my request. I told them I had received word that my child was likely to die, and that I was anxious to be with its afflicted mother; but they would not give way. I was sadly tried, and I said, "I shall go home notwithstanding. If I find my child alive and likely to recover, I will return and preach; if I do not find it better, I shall not return. I shall stay at home and take the consequences!" I had already walked thirteen miles. It was ten or eleven more to Blyth. I walked the whole distance. There was no conveyance. My superintendent was allowed horse hire; but I was not: and I could not afford to pay for a horse myself out of sixteen dollars or three pound five a month. I reached home, and found my child a little better. After a little rest, I started back on foot to my appointment. My wife looked out of the window after me, weeping, afraid to ask me to remain with her. She knew the temper of my superintendent, and the feeling of the people, so she wept in silence. I walked over ten miles more, and then preached. I walked altogether thirty-three miles that day. I was very much tired; but I had seen my wife and child, so I went through my work without complaining, and was up very early next morning, and walked ten miles more to breakfast with my darling wife, and to comfort her sorrowful heart. My child got well, and all things turned out happily in the end. Still, the unkindness of the Conference in punishing me so undeservedly, and the cruelty of my superintendent and the Westmoor leaders, made me feel very keenly, and I could never think of those matters without

Hosted by Google

something like indignation and horror. And all these annoyances lessened my respect for many of my brethren, and helped to prepare the way for future troubles.

My troubles did not all come from the preachers. There were several laymen in and about Newcastle-on-Tyne, who seemed to think it a duty to annoy their young minister. The worst, though in some respects the best, of that class was Thomas Snowdon, an old local preacher, leader, and trustee. The first interview that I had with this man he took occasion to insult me respecting my marriage, and also gave me to understand that he should expect me to be in perfect subjection to his will, if I wished to enjoy much peace or comfort in the circuit. It fell to my lot to be lodged and boarded for part of my time at his house, and to show his way of proceeding I may give the following.

It was his custom to read a portion of the Scriptures to his family every morning, and as he passed along he would make comments on what he read. When I was there, he would frequently stop in his readings and comments, to ask my opinion, and he seemed to expect that I must always concur in what he said. At times however I was obliged to dissent from his sayings, and then would follow a little controversy. Those controversies were never very profitable, in consequence of his constant desire to force his own opinions on me, and to extort from me assent to his whimsical and foolish observations. Yet he still continued to force those controversies.

He also took upon himself the office of perpetual censurer of my discourses. And his censures were generally proportioned to the goodness of the sermon. If I happened to be particularly at liberty in my discourse, and preach better than usual, he would blame almost everything. If I preached indifferently, he would censure less; and if I preached poorly, if I was embarrassed in my discourse, and seemed troubled or sad on that account, he would scarcely censure at all. Then the things which he censured would be sure to be the best and truest parts of my sermon. He appeared to think that he was out of his duty, unless he was endeavoring to torture the mind of the young preacher, and to force him, if possible, into subjection to his will.

Hosted by Google

On one occasion he and I had nearly quarrelled. He had tried me till I could keep silence no longer, so I told him plainly what I thought about his manner of proceeding. I spoke so plainly, that both he and his wife were seriously put about. Soon after that, on my visiting the Newcastle side of the circuit, I found that the people at whose house I was then accustomed to sleep, had gone off, and closed the house, so that I was obliged to look out for other lodgings. I went directly to Mr. Snowdon's. He was the principal man in the circuit, and it was his place to see that I was properly provided for. His wife seemed astonished when I entered the house: but I told her how the matter stood; and I added, that I did not feel disposed to go, at that time of the night, (for it was getting rather late) to any other lodging; so that I hoped she would give me a bed. I also said, that unless I could be accommodated with a bed there, I would at once return to Blyth. She said, 'I should always be glad to see you, and to give you either bed or anything else, if you would not disagree and dispute so with our master.' I replied, 'It is your master that will disagree and dispute with me. I should be quiet enough, if he would let me alone. I never force my opinions on him; it is only when he attempts to force his opinions on me that I ever speak. You must yourself have seen that he will neither allow me to be silent, nor allow me quietly to speak my mind; that he *will* oblige me to speak, and yet always finds fault if I say anything at variance with what *he* says.' She acknowledged that her husband was rather queer in that respect, but still thought that I might manage a great deal better with him if I would. I told her I had done my best, and that it was all to no purpose. 'He will ask my opinion,' said I, 'on every subject that comes into his head, and then begin to complain whenever my opinion happens to differ from his.' I also added, that I thought he sometimes disputed with me merely for the sake of disputing, and contradicted me, not because he thought I was wrong, but because he thought that it would be too much of a compliment to acknowledge that he agreed with me on any subject. She thought I was too severe upon him. I said, 'Well, just wait and see to-night, and if it is not as I have said, you shall blame me

Hosted by Google

as much as you like, and I will acknowledge myself in error.'

Almost immediately Mr. Snowdon came in. 'What are *you* doing here to-night?' said he. 'I have come to sleep here,' I replied, 'and more than that, I *must* sleep here, or else return to Blyth. Mr. G——'s house is closed, and it is too late to seek a bed elsewhere.' He made no objections, and things proceeded as usual. He soon took his Bible, called the family around him, and began to read. The lesson was in Isaiah. He had not read far before he began to explain a passage. 'This,' said he, 'refers to our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. It points out the glory of His character and of His person as the supreme God and Lord of all; exhibits Him as the *Maker* as well as the *Saviour* of the world. Do you not think so, Mr. Barker?' said he. I remained silent. 'Is not that your view of the subject, Mr. Barker?' he added. 'I have no objections to offer,' I said. This did not seem exactly to satisfy him; but he went on, and read again. 'And so it is,' said he; 'we are all by nature as an unclean thing; there is no health in us. How deeply we are fallen, Mr. Barker! Do you not think so, Mr. Barker?' I made no reply. He wished to know why I was silent. I said I did not like to be always talking on those matters,—that I would rather he would read on, and allow us to think about the chapter at our leisure afterwards. All this time his wife was dreadfully fidgetty. She wanted to speak to him, but could not. She wished to catch his attention by her looks, but to no purpose. The proof of the truth of what I had said was becoming too strong for her, and she could scarcely sit still on her chair. He proceeded: 'This,' said he, 'refers to the glory of the Church of Christ in the latter days, when the Gentiles shall be converted, and the Jews brought back to their own land. This will be a glorious time, Mr. Barker. What are your views on this subject, Mr. Barker?' Then he added some further remarks, concluding with the question, 'Do you not think so, Mr. Barker?' I now began to laugh: I could hold no longer. 'And do you laugh at God's holy word?' said he: and a terrible lecture he would have read me, had not his wife broke out and said, 'Hinney, you are to blame, you are to blame. You won't let

Hosted by Google

Mr. Barker alone: he would be silent if you would allow him: you are too bad.' He repeated his terrible rebuke of my levity, and I began to explain. I told him what had passed between his wife and me before he came in. I told him all that I thought about his way of proceeding towards me in those matters, and he, poor fellow, was completely confounded. I told him that it seemed to me as if he really took pleasure in tormenting people; as if he could not be happy unless he thought that he was making other people miserable,—that he seemed to begrudge those that were around him the least ease, or quietness, or pleasure, and to wish to keep them on a perpetual rack. It was his time now to explain and apologize, and what do you think was the reason he assigned for his proceedings? 'Hinney,' said he, 'Mr. Barker is a young minister, and I wish to inure him to hardness as a good soldier of our Lord Jesus Christ.' I told him there were painful things enough in the world to inure men to hardness without his making more, &c. After this he never annoyed me much in that way again. He did not allow me to rest altogether; that would have been too much; but he was a vast deal better; and if he ever after this began to be queer, I always felt greater confidence in refusing to talk to him, and in letting him know that I expected to be allowed to have a little of my own way.

I never could persuade myself but that this man was, after all, a good man. I believe he really feared God and loved his fellow-men. I think he was conscientious and benevolent. Among other proofs of his benevolence I may mention, that he took an orphan family under his care, and reared them. He made them *work*, it is true; he made *every* one work that was under *him*; but he fed them, and clothed them, and taught them in his way. He acted, in short, like a father to them.

Again, when my mother came over to see me at Newcastle, he invited her to his house. He showed her every possible attention. He was as kind as it was possible for a man to be. And when she had to leave for Leeds, he was up by four or five o'clock in the morning, to provide her a comfortable breakfast, and take her to the coach. But I observed that he was always kinder to old people than to

Hosted by Google

young people. I suppose he thought that old people had had trouble enough, and that he had therefore no need to give them more; but that young people were in danger of being too happy, of having too little trouble, and that it was necessary therefore that he should be their tormentor. But even to the young he could be kind on occasions, very kind; and if the young showed a disposition to meet his views, to receive his sayings as oracles, and always to consult his will, he would even caress and commend them. But he could receive no measured or limited subjection. They must neither think, nor speak, nor smile, nor stir but in accordance with his will if they wished to enjoy his favor. The least imaginable opposition to his judgment or his pleasure, would draw forth his rebukes.

There were laymen in almost all places who took upon themselves to tell you what you should believe and teach, and to condemn you as a heretic if you did not attend to their suggestions.

24. In 1837, shortly after I was stationed in Mossley, I had a public discussion with a clergyman on the propriety or lawfulness of teaching the children of the poor to write in our Sunday-schools. The New Connexion people in the Mossley circuit taught writing in their Sunday-schools, and they had, in consequence, a very large attendance of scholars, and very prosperous churches. Their scholars outnumbered those of all the other schools put together. This seemed to annoy the ministers of the other denominations, and it was no uncommon thing for those ministers, when they came to preach the yearly sermons in behalf of the funds of their schools, to say strong things against the practice of the New Connexion. Dr. Nunn, of the Established Church, contended that it was Sabbath-breaking, and challenged the New Connexion officials to a public discussion on the subject. They accepted the challenge, and appointed me their champion. I contended, that in the circumstances in which the children of the poor were placed at that time, it was an act of mercy and Christian beneficence to teach them to write on Sundays. The clergyman gave up the contest before the time allowed for the debate came to a close, and I was proclaimed victor. I published my views on the subject in a pamphlet, entitled MERCY TRIUMPHANT, which

Hosted by Google

had an extensive circulation, and produced a powerful effect on the views of large numbers of people. Some of my brethren denounced the pamphlet as heretical, and the editor of the *Magazine* took occasion to inform his readers, in an offensive way, that my views were not the views of the body to which I belonged.

25. In the Sheffield circuit I had several unpleasant collisions with one of my colleagues, and a couple of superannuated ministers, about a rich but very unworthy member there. This man was anxious to control the action of the whole circuit, and even of the whole Connexion, and one of my colleagues, and the two superannuated ministers, one of which was Mr. Allin, my old and persistent opponent, took his part. I had myself no faith in the man. I knew him to be both an ignorant and unworthy person. He was, in fact, a drunkard. Both he and Mr. Allin once, after having spent the day at a public feast, came into an official meeting drunk in the evening. I was present, and saw the horrible sight. It afterwards came out that this rude, ambitious man was something worse than a drunkard. I did what I could to avoid an open rupture with my colleagues and this man's friends, and succeeded for a time, but they obliged me at last, either to sanction what I felt to be wrong, or openly to protest against their proceedings. I protested. And now the unsubstantial peace which had existed between us for a time was followed by a very unhappy rupture, which left deep and angry wounds in the hearts of all the contending parties.

26. But to give all the incidents which proved the occasion of bitter feeling and alienation between me and a number of my brethren would require a book. They were happening almost continually. When once people have ceased to regard each other with love and confidence, they can neither speak nor stir without giving each other offence. And this was the state to which I and several of my brethren had come. Indeed such was the unhappy state of our feelings, that we had ceased to take pleasure in pleasing, and had come almost to take delight in trying one another. Instead of coming as near together as we could, we got as far as possible apart. We came at length to feel a kind of gratification in finding what appeared good rea-

Hosted by Google

sons for differing from one another. The consequence was, we came to differ from each other so much, that it became impossible for us to work together to any advantage.

And there was no one with wisdom and piety sufficient to interpose and heal the breach, or even to prevent it from getting continually wider. The gentleman who had acted as mediator and moderator when my article on *Toleration and Human Creeds* was arraigned, and who had also brought about the temporary settlement of a more serious dispute at the Conference following, now found the case beyond his powers, and made no further attempts at reconciliation. He saw it necessary, if he would retain his influence in the Body, to become a partizan, instead of a mediator, and he chose the side of my opponents. There were two other men—two of the oldest and ablest of our ministers—and two of the most exemplary Christians in the Body—who saw the danger of the tempest that was raging against me, and who would have been glad to screen me from its violence, but they were afraid to interpose. They loved me and esteemed me, and sympathized with me in many of my views; but to have attempted to save me from the fury of my opponents, would have been to risk their own reputation and position. One of them had already suffered in consequence of the freedom with which he had expressed his views on certain anti-christian doctrines, though he had written with far more caution, and acted with much more prudence, than I had done; and he no doubt felt, that if he could not, without so much difficulty, save himself, it would be vain to attempt to save another, who had spoken and written with so much more freedom, and acted with so much more independence. So the storm was left to rage and spend its fury on my own head.

I cannot give an account of all that followed during the last two years which I spent in connection with the Church; it would make my story too long. But things got worse and worse as time passed on.

In 1840 I brought my *Evangelical Reformer* to a close. In the last number I declared my unchanged belief in the sentiments set forth in my article on "*Toleration, Human Creeds, &c.*" I also contradicted the reports that had been spread abroad by my enemies, to the effect that I had, at

Hosted by Google

the preceding Conference, retracted certain expressions used in my writings with regard to justification, the witness of the Spirit, &c.; and censured the conduct of the ruling party in my case in very plain terms. I said, "If any of my opponents imagine that I have recanted a single sentence that I have published in this work, they are under some misapprehension. There is not a doctrine that I have inculcated in it that I do not still maintain. And I declare my full conviction that the resolutions which were passed in reference to me by the Ashton and Huddersfield Conferences were based in error, and that the proceedings of my opponents in this matter were uncalled for and unchristian."

My enemies at once decided on my expulsion. Their purpose was to cast me out at the following Conference, and Mr. Allin published a small tract in reply to my article on Human Creeds, to prepare the minds of the people for the intended measure. He published it just before Conference, when he supposed it would be impossible for me to prepare a reply before the Body assembled. I never saw it till the evening of Thursday, the day but one before that on which I was to leave home for the distant place where the Conference was to meet. But I wrote a reply the same night, and got it printed, and in less than twenty-four hours it was circulating in every direction. I had been able to show that my opponent's arguments proved just the contrary of what they were brought forward to prove. I also showed that the views advocated in my article were the views of Mr. Kilham, the founder of the Body to which we all belonged, and were, in fact, the views of some of the best and ablest men that the Church universal had ever produced. I gave quite a multitude of quotations justifying my article to the very letter. The effect was astounding. The people saw at once that I was right. My enemies were confounded. They were paralyzed. And I was saved.

But it was only for a time. The contest had lasted so long, and had produced such a fearful amount of unhappy feeling between me and my opponents, that reconciliation and comfortable co-operation had become impossible. It could not be expected that a powerful party would rest con-

Hosted by Google

tent under a defeat; and it was not in me to give up my efforts to bring about a better state of things in the Connexion. And hence a renewal of the unhappy strife.

It is natural to suppose that my enemies would now be anxious to get rid of me, and would watch for a suitable occasion to cast me out; and my ideas of duty were such, that it was impossible for me long to refrain from giving them the opportunity they desired. I did it as follows.

1. The early churches provided for their poor members. The Quakers, the Moravians, and the early Methodists did the same. This exercise of brotherly love is enjoined by Christ and His Apostles. I urged this duty on the church to which I belonged. I preached and published a sermon on the subject, and circulated a number of tracts on the same point, published by others.

2. The travelling preachers had a Fund, called the Beneficent Fund, for the support of superannuated preachers and preachers' widows. Some of the rules of this fund seemed to me to be anti-christian, and I labored to get them altered. I also recommended that there should be a fund for worn-out and needy local preachers.

3. Members of the churches mingled with drunkards, profligates, and infidels, in benefit societies, and many other associations. This seemed to me to be very objectionable, and plainly unscriptural, and I recommended that they should come out from such societies, and form associations for good objects among themselves.

4. Wesley had provided cheap books and pamphlets for his societies, and I urged the Conference to do the same for ours. I wrote letters to the Annual Committee, the representatives of the Connexion, showing that books published at eight or ten shillings a volume, could be supplied at one or one and sixpence. I reminded them of the fact that the Book-room had abundance of spare capital which might be profitably used in such a work, and I pointed out the advantages likely to result from the encouragement of thoughtful and studious habits among the people. I published a pamphlet on the subject, entitled *The Church and the Press*, showing that the churches might almost monopolize the supply of books, and become the teachers and the rulers of the nations. I said, "If the Church at large would do its

Hosted by Google

duty, every dark place on earth might be visited, and the seeds of truth and righteousness sown in every part of the globe in a few years." With regard to our own Connexion I said, "Our Magazine and Book-room, which ought to be promoting the intellectual and religious improvement of the Connexion and the world, are doing just nothing at all, or next to nothing. The leading articles of the Magazine are among the dullest and most useless things ever printed. The Book-room, which has capital enough to publish thirty or forty new books a year, does not issue one. An institution which ought to be filling the Connexion and the country generally with the light and blessings of Christianity, and which is capable of being made a blessing to the world at large, is allowed to 'stand there all the day idle.'"

I then proposed, as a means of stimulating the Book Committee and the Editor of the Magazine to greater activity, that I and my friends should be allowed to publish a periodical, and to establish a Book-room, at our own expense. The proposal was not only rejected, but even treated as a capital offence.

5. I had labored hard against the infidel socialists, lecturing against them in almost all the large towns in the kingdom, and I was, to a great extent, the means of breaking up their societies. But my contests with those infidels made me more sensible of the necessity of abandoning all human additions to Christ's doctrine, and of having nothing to defend but the beautiful and beneficent principles of pure unadulterated Christianity. Hence I became still less of a sectarian in my belief, and more and more of a simple Christian, and I labored to promote a stricter conformity to the teachings of Christ among ministers and Christians generally.

6. I wrote against the waste of God's money by professing Christians in luxurious living and vain show, and exhorted the rich to employ their surplus wealth in doing good.

7. That it might not be said that I received pay from the church for doing one kind of work while I employed a portion of my time in doing others, I gave up my salary, and refused to receive anything from the circuit in which I was stationed, except what was given me as a free-will offering.

Hosted by Google

8. I withdrew from the preachers' benefit society, resolved, in case of sickness or old age, to trust for a supply of my wants to the providence of God.

9. I recommended the Connexion to pay off all the chapel debts, and prepare itself for more vigorous and extensive aggressions on the kingdom of darkness.

All these things increased the anxiety of my opponents to get me out of the ministry; but they would probably have failed to give them the power to accomplish their object, if I had gone no farther. But I believed it my duty to take another step.

10. It was the custom in the Body to which I belonged, to baptize children in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This form of words was understood by me to imply that infant baptism was commanded by God in Scripture. This, however, I doubted, and I declined to use the words when naming or baptizing children. I had no objection to name children, to pray for them, or even to sprinkle them; but I could not use an expression in a sense in which I did not think it strictly true. This emboldened my enemies to attempt my expulsion without more ado, and this time they adopted measures calculated to ensure success. They issued circulars on the subject to the ministers and to the leading and influential laymen. They called secret meetings. They employed a variety of means which seemed to me and my friends to savor more of Popish tyranny than of Christian discipline. At length Conference came, and I was called to account. The charges against me were—

1. That I had denied the divine appointment of baptism, and refused to administer the ordinance.

2. That I had denied the divine appointment and present obligation of the Lord's supper.

3. That I had declared myself opposed to the beneficent fund.

4. That I had announced the formation of a book establishment, thereby engaging in worldly pursuits, contrary to rule, and by this means opposing the best interests of the Book-room.

None of those charges were true. 1. What I proposed to do with regard to the supply of books, was no more

Hosted by Google

worldly business than preaching was, or selling the publications of the Connexion. The object was not profit, but extended usefulness. 2. I had not declared myself opposed to the Beneficent Fund, but had simply proposed the improvement of its rules, and the extension of its operations. 3. I had not denied either the divine appointment or present obligation of the Lord's supper. 4. Nor had I denied the divine appointment of baptism, but only declared my belief that *water baptism*, though a becoming rite under the Christian dispensation, was the baptism of John, and absolutely binding only under his intermediate dispensation.

The two latter charges were not pressed, and even the second was speedily given up, the one on baptism only remaining. This was pressed, and as my views on the subject were deemed intolerable, I was expelled.

There was a fearful display of bad feeling on the part of many of my opponents. And no little pressure was brought to bear on those who were opposed to extreme measures. It was a time of terrible trial to those who showed themselves my friends. The height to which the excitement against me rose can hardly be made intelligible to my readers of the present day. I regarded the proceedings of my opponents from beginning to end as dishonorable, unjust and cruel. "They have gone," said I, in my account of the proceedings of the Conference, "they have gone in opposition to every dictate both of equity and charity. The principles on which they have acted are the low, the dark, and the tyrannical principles of Popery. They have covered themselves with dishonor, and earned for themselves a name for injustice, intolerance and cruelty, beyond all the religious denominations in the land. Many a time, as I sat in my place in Conference, hearing what was said, and observing what was done, I asked myself, 'Is this like Christ? Can this be pleasing to God? What must angels think to look upon a scene like this? Perpetual talk about the authority of Conference and the majesty of the rules; but not a word about the authority of Christ, or the majesty and supremacy of the Gospel. And such overbearing, such harshness, such determined unrelenting cruelty towards all who showed a determination to act according to their own

Hosted by Google

convictions of duty.' In the evenings, after the sittings of Conference were adjourned, I and a friend frequently walked out among the hills surrounding the town, conversing with each other, and with our heavenly Father, and oh! what a contrast! What a boundless contrast between the atmosphere of Conference, and the atmosphere of those sweet hills! What an infinite relief to be placed beyond the sound of angry strife, and jealous, persecuting rage; to walk at large over the lofty hills, to breathe the fresh air of heaven, to converse with God, to look upon His wondrous works, to hear the sweet music of the birds, to trace the silent path of the shadowy woods, or to stand on the exposed, uncovered peaks of the mountain tops, and cast one's eyes on fruitful vales, and quiet homes, and all that earth can show of grand and beautiful, and most of all, to see in every sight the hand of God—to hear in every sound His voice,—to feel that the Great, Almighty, Unseen Spirit of the Universe, that lived and worked through all, was our Father and our love,—to feel that we were one with Him, and that He was one with us. 'This is heaven,' I cried; and, pointing to the scene of strife and hate that lurked below, I added, 'That is hell.' Never before did we understand why Jesus, after having spent the day in crowds, and being harassed with the captious, cruel, persecuting Scribes and Pharisees, retired at night into the desert, or withdrew to the mountains. Never before did the Gospel seem so true a story. Never before were we brought into such living sympathy with the Saviour of mankind. I can recollect nothing I ever met with so trying as to sit in Conference; but in our walks upon the high places, God made up for all." "Well," I added, "I thank God I am now free. My Conference trials are ended. O never more may I be found shut up with men who set at nought the authority of Christ, and who, by all the cruel arts of unrelenting persecution, strive to bend the immortal godlike mind into unnatural subjection to their ambitious will."

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATIONS.

A few explanations are required before we go further.

Explanation First. The Different Methodist Bodies.

The Methodist Body to which my parents belonged, and to which I myself belonged till I was twenty-one years of age, was the Old Connexion or Wesleyan Body. I was a local preacher in that Body, and was expected and requested to go out as a travelling preacher. But insurmountable difficulties lay in the way. In the first place, none could be received as travelling preachers, unless they were willing to go to whatever part of the world the conference or the missionary committee might think fit to send them, and unless they could *express* their willingness to be so disposed of before they went out. This I could not do. It was my conviction that God had called me to labor in my own country, and to do good amongst my own people. I did not believe myself called to go to any foreign country to preach the gospel, and I did not therefore feel at liberty to offer to go out on the terms required. I felt as if I should do wrong to expose myself to unseen dangers and unknown trials and difficulties in foreign lands, without a conviction that God required it at my hands. And I could not think that I should be likely to succeed in missionary labors, unless I could enter on them with a belief that those were the labors for which God designed me.

There was another difficulty. Conference had made a new law, establishing a new test of orthodoxy, and no one could be taken out as a travelling preacher now, who could not subscribe to the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship, as taught by Richard Watson and Jabez Bunting, in opposition to Adam Clarke. This test I could not subscribe. I cannot say that I altogether disbelieved the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship; but I was not in a state of mind to justify me in subscribing the doc-

Hosted by Google

trine. Whether the doctrine of the Eternal Sonship was right or not, I had not a firm belief in it: and that was reason enough why I should refuse to subscribe it.

About this time Conference passed laws forbidding the teaching of writing in all the Sunday Schools. I disapproved of these laws, and was unable to bind myself to enforce them. I was obliged therefore to give up all thoughts of becoming a travelling preacher in the Old Connexion.

Not long after this, disturbances took place in the Methodist society in Leeds, respecting the introduction of an organ into Brunswick Chapel. Conference, through the importunities of some rich people, had broken through its own laws, and given authority for the introduction of an organ into Brunswick Chapel contrary to the wishes of a great part of the members, trustees, local preachers, and leaders. I of course disapproved of this proceeding on the part of Conference. I had heard the Rev. Joseph Suttcliffe speak very seriously and with great and sorrowful dissatisfaction of the proceedings of those who were then at the head of Methodistical affairs, and though I did not, at the time, rightly understand him, events that took place afterwards, both brought his words to my mind, and showed me their meaning. In consequence of what I saw, I began to be greatly dissatisfied with the manner in which things were carried on in the society.

A division took place in Leeds, and in several other places, and the seceders formed a new body, called the Protestant Methodists. I left the old Body at the same time, but having heard favorable accounts of the Methodist New Connexion, I joined that community. This Body had seceded from the Old Connexion some thirty years before, under the Leadership of Alexander Kilham. Kilham was a great reformer both in religion and politics. He sympathized with the French revolutionists, and with the English religious Latitudinarians. He was a great admirer of Robert Robinson of Cambridge, and reprinted, in his periodical, *the Methodist Monitor*, his writings on religious liberty. He denounced all human creeds, and proclaimed the Bible the one sole authority in the church both in matters of doctrine and matters of duty. The conference of the Body was to consist of one-half preachers

Hosted by Google

and the other half laymen. In the circuit and society meetings the power was to be divided in the same way. A list of doctrines generally held in the Body was afterwards drawn up and published, but was not put forward as an authoritative creed. The writings of Wesley and Fletcher were referred to, but not as authorities, but only as works to be consulted. I found on looking through the rules, that there was nothing to hinder me from becoming a travelling preacher in this Body. I offered myself as a member, and was received. I was then sent out as a travelling preacher; and it is to this Body chiefly that I refer in this work.

I entered the ministry with the full understanding that I should have perfect Christian liberty both of thought and speech,—that nothing was required of any minister but a belief in the New Testament, a life in accordance with its teachings, and the abilities necessary to fit him for his work. The perfection of the Scriptures, both as a rule of faith and a rule of life, was one of the first articles in the connexional list of doctrines, and each preacher was left to interpret the Scriptures for himself.

To show that the liberty I took in revising my creed was in full agreement with the principles on which the Body to which I belonged was founded, I will give a quotation or two from the Founder's works.

"Subscription to all human creeds implies two dispositions contrary to true religion, love of dominion over conscience in the imposer, and slavery in the subscribers. The first usurps the right of Christ; the last implies allegiance to a pretender." Vol. I, page 77.

"The revelation itself is infallible, and the Author of it has given it me to examine; but the establishment of a given meaning of it renders examination needless, and perhaps dangerous." P. 78.

"I have no patience with those who cover their own stupidity, pride, or laziness, with a pretended acquiescence in the unexamined opinions of men who very probably never examined their own opinions themselves, but professed those which lay nearest at hand, and which best suited their base secular interest." Vol. II, p. 340.

"I am seriously of opinion, and I wish all my readers

Hosted by Google

would seriously consider it, *that real Christianity will never thoroughly prevail and flourish in the world, till the professors of it are brought to be upon better terms with one another; lay aside their mutual jealousies and animosities, and live as brethren in sincere harmony and love; but which will, I apprehend, never be, till conscience is left entirely free; and the plain BIBLE become in FACT, as it is in PROFESSION, the ONLY rule of their religious faith and practice.*" P. 271.

Such were the sentiments which Alexander Kilham thought proper to publish on the subject of creeds.

He adds, that he did so for the purpose of "giving to our people and others *suitable views of religious liberty in general*, AND OF WHAT OUGHT TO BE ESTABLISHED AMONG US IN PARTICULAR."

In all I did, then, both in endeavoring to bring my views into harmony with the teachings of Christ, and in suggesting reforms in the laws and institutions of the Body, I acted in perfect accordance with the principles on which the Connexion was founded. Whether the principle was a good one or not may be questioned: all I say is, it sanctioned my course.

Explanation Second. Immoralities.

What I say of immoralities in ministers and members of the Church refers chiefly to ministers and members of the New Connexion. I must not however be understood as saying that the ministers and members of the Old Connexion were free from such vices. They were not. James Etchells, the minister who drank sixteen glasses of intoxicating drinks on one round of pastoral calls, and John Farrar, his superintendent, whom he got suspended for drunkenness, and Richard Wilson, who opened the first spirit shop in my native town, and corrupted the people all round the country, and Timothy Bentley, the great Brewer and Poisoner-General of the bodies and souls of the Yorkshire people, and John Falkener, of New Castle-on-Tyne, the wholesale Beershop-Keeper, &c., were all members and high officials in the Wesleyan Body. And I never heard of a man being either kept out or put out of the Wesleyan Connexion either for being a Brewer, a

Hosted by Google

Distiller, a Spirit Merchant, a Ginshop Keeper, a Publican, a Pawnbroker, or a Beershop-keeper. And I never heard of the Conference doing anything to promote teetotalism, or the suppression of the liquor trade. The rules and teachings of Wesley, and the principles of Christ on this subject, were as little cared for in the Old as in the New Connexion.

There were points though in which the Old Connexion seemed to me superior to the New. There seemed more hearty religiousness in the Old Connexion than in the New. The preachers in the Old Connexion seemed to be a higher order of men, both in piety and intelligence. They seemed to be kinder too to each other, less jealous, less envious, and less disposed to annoy and persecute one another. And they worked harder. They had more of the spirit of Wesley. They were less anxious to steal sheep from other folds, and more disposed to go out into the wilderness to bring in those which were astray. With many of the New Connexion members religion was too much of a form and a name: with an immense number in the Old Connexion it was a life and a power. Hence the Old Connexion prospered, while the New Connexion languished and declined. The New Connexion trusted to their democratic principles of church government for additions, and were disappointed. The Old Connexion trusted to honest, zealous, Christian work, and succeeded. The Old Connexion bred great and mighty men, the New Connexion bred weak and little ones. The New Connexion was afraid of superior men, and if any made their appearance, drove them away, as in the case of Richard Watson and others; the Old Connexion welcomed such men, and used them, and reaped from their labors rich harvests of blessing. I might myself perhaps, if my way into its ministry had not been blocked up, have been much more happy and useful in the Old Connexion than in the New, and have had a very different story to tell in my old age, from that which I am telling you now. I don't know.

No; I don't know. It is quite possible that I was so formed,—that religious freedom was so essential to the soul God had given me,—that I should have broken through the enclosures of any sect, and made for myself a history

Hosted by Google

like that which I am now writing. But speculations on such subjects are all vain. A man can live but once, and in one way, and all we can do now is to live well for the future,—as well as we can. God help us.

God will help us. And we must not suppose that because we have not had the lot which imagination pictures as most desirable, we have lived in vain. Let us look on matters in a more cheerful light. The world, and all our affairs, are in the hands of an all-perfect God, and always have been, and I am inclined to believe, that with regard to myself, He has done all things well. I meant to do right from the first. I never wickedly departed from God. I erred unintentionally and unexpectedly. I erred seeking for the truth. I erred praying to God to lead me right. And I am inclined to believe that my course was not entirely of myself, but was a discipline appointed me by a higher power, and meant to further some desirable end. So I will go on hoping and rejoicing, interpreting God's doings as favorably as I can, and believing, that what I know not now, I shall know hereafter. And all the time I will rejoice in God's love, and sing Glory, Hallelujah.

Explanation Third. Christianity and Methodism not to Blame.

Do not let any one judge of Christianity or Methodism, nor even of the whole body of the Methodist Church, from the cases of immorality which I have found it necessary to name. Christianity and real Wesleyan Methodism are as opposed to bad trades and bad deeds as light is to darkness. And bad as things were in the churches to which I have referred, a large portion, if not the great bulk of the members, were sincere Christians, fearing God and working righteousness. Nor were all the preachers bad-hearted or cruel men. It often happens that a few control the many. And the ruling few are often worse than the many whom they rule. The least worthy members of the church are often, like Diotrephes, eager for the pre-eminence, while the best are modest and retiring. It is not always the cream that comes to the top, either in civil or religious society: it is sometimes the scum. And

Hosted by Google

my readers must take these things into account while reading my story. The early Methodist churches were blessed organizations, bitterly as Wesley and Fletcher lamented their shortcomings and backslidings. With all their faults they were the lights of the world, and the salt of the earth. They are so still. They were so in the days of which I write. And the same may be said of other churches. They fall very far short of the perfection of Christian knowledge and holiness, but they are as far in advance of a godless world, as Christianity is in advance of them. I think it no objection to Christians or to Christian churches that they do not at once embody and exemplify Christian truth and virtue in all their fullness, any more than I think it an objection to men of science and scientific associations that they do not know and set forth all the laws of the material universe. Men are finite, while Nature and Christianity are infinite. Christianity will always be ahead of churches, and nature will always be ahead of science, as God will always be ahead of man. I would have churches and ministers improve, and I would tell them of their faults and shortcomings that they may see where improvement is wanted, but I would not on any account do them injustice, or give countenance to the infidel slander that the church is worse than the godless world, or a twentieth part as bad.

And though I would explain how unhappily I was influenced by the errors and misdoings of my brethren, that I may make my apostacy from Christ intelligible, I have no desire to make the impression that all with whom I came in uncomfortable collision were great sinners, while I was a meek and faultless saint. I know the contrary. There were errors and failings on both sides. I may sometimes think 'I was more sinned against than sinning,' but at other times I am ashamed and confounded at my great and grievous errors. God forgive me. I was dreadfully tried at times by my brethren; but my brethren were tried by me at other times past all endurance. God only knows which was most to blame; but I was bad enough. If either I or my brethren had been as wise and good as men should strive to be, both they and I might have had a very different story to tell; a story much more agreeable to our readers and much more creditable to ourselves. But the past

Hosted by Google

is past, and my brethren, most of them, have gone to judgment, and I am hastening after; and it behooves me to tell as fair a story, and to tell it in as meek and lowly and loving a spirit as possible. And I here declare, that if any expression of bitterness, or any statement savoring of harshness or injustice, escapes my lips, I wish it softened, and brought into harmony with perfect truth and charity.

It is very difficult, when a man is giving an account of his life, to be strictly just and impartial. Perhaps it is impossible. It is very difficult, when he is telling of his trials, to keep from all expressions of strong and unpleasant feeling towards those whom he regards as the causes of his trials. Perhaps this also is impossible. My readers must consider this, and make allowances both for me and my brethren.

And both my readers and I must try to bear in mind, that men are not the sole actors in the pitiable blunders and melancholy tragedies of their lives. God had to do with the descent of Joseph into Egypt. His brethren were the visible actors, but a Great Invisible Actor directed and controlled their doings. Our ignorance and our vices are our own, but the form they take in action, and the effects they produce, are God's. Shimei's wickedness was his own, but it was God that caused it to show itself in throwing stones at David. All our trials are, in truth, from God, and it would be well for us to regard them in that light. And we ought no more to be malignantly resentful towards the men whom God makes use of to try us, than we ought to murmur against God. We should try to go through all with the meek and quiet spirit with which Jesus went through the still greater trials that lay in His path. And in speaking of our trials, we should try to exhibit the sweet forgiving temper that shines out so gloriously in the life and death of the Redeemer. And if we can go a step farther, and rejoice in tribulation, and smile in peaceful tranquility at the erring but divinely guided actors in our trials, so much the better. And if we can believe that all things work together for good not only to them that love God, but even to those who for a time are unwittingly separated from God, why should we not 'rejoice evermore, and in everything give thanks?' My gracious God, I know

Hosted by Google

that there are expressions in this book that might have been better,—that feelings sometimes show themselves that are not the perfection of Christian love and meekness; and I ask Thee in Thy mercy to forgive them all: And I pray Thee so to influence my soul for the time to come, and to enable me so to use my tongue and pen, that all I say and write may savor of Jesus, be in agreement with my Christian profession, and tend to the instruction and spiritual improvement of my hearers and readers.

Explanation Fourth. My Own Defects.

My character was very defective in my early days. I have felt this a hundred times while I have been writing and revising the foregoing pages. I was wanting in humility. There were some kinds of pride from which I was probably free; but there were others of which I had more than my share. And I was lacking in meekness. I could control myself and keep quite calm in a public debate; but could be angry and resentful in other cases. I was not sufficiently forbearing. I was not sufficiently forgiving.

And I was too critical, too pugnacious, too controversial. I was too much in the habit of looking for defects in what I heard and read: defects in style; errors in thought; mistakes in reasoning; faults in arrangement; and improprieties in manner and spirit.

Considering that I was to a great extent self-taught, that much that I learned I learned after I had become almost a man, this perhaps was natural; but it was a disadvantage. It would have been better if I had sought only for the true, the good, the beautiful in what I heard, and read, and saw. I ought, perhaps, instead of exercising my critical powers on others, to have contented myself with exercising them on my own character and performances, and with endeavoring in all things to set an example of what was worthy of imitation. It may be that I was *naturally, constitutionally* critical; but that does not make it right or wise. I ought to have warred with my constitutional propensities, and to have kept my critical tendencies within the bounds of prudence and charity.

But this wisdom was too high for me in my early days, and I fear that while I was pressing attention to practical

Hosted by Google

matters on others, I was myself too much busied in doctrinal matters. I was too zealous *against* certain doctrines while rebuking others for being too zealous *for* them. While they were too doctrinal and controversial positively, I was too doctrinal and controversial negatively. They erred in going too far; I was too zealous in pushing them back.

In many things my enemies were wrong: but there were other things in which I was not right. They were very foolish; and I was far from wise. I see it, I feel it all, and I lament it too. And still I feel the remains of my old defects and vices clinging to me. I have still great need of the mercy of God, and of the forbearance and kind consideration of my brethren. God help me, if it be not too late, to improve both in wisdom and in Christian virtue. My Gracious God, it is Thy wish that Thy people 'should be conformed to the image of Thy Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.' Oh, if I could but approach that point, and be worthy to take some humble place as a brother of that glorious embodiment of all moral and spiritual excellence, what would I not give,—what would I not do! If it be possible,

Make me, by thy transforming love,
Dear Saviour, daily more like Thee.

And while the blessed process of transformation is going on, keep me, O Thou Friend and Saviour of mankind, from every evil word and deed, and from every great and grievous error.

Explanation Fifth. Theology and Theologians.

If any think I have been too severe in my remarks on theology and theologians, and on the preachers who mock their hearers with theological vanities, and puzzle them with their senseless theological dialect, let them read the remarks of the Rev. Joseph Parker, D. D., G. Gilfillan, Albert Barnes, John Wesley, Richard Baxter, and others on this subject. Quotations from their writings may be found farther on in the volume. We would give a few of their remarks here, but we must now hasten on with our story.

Hosted by Google

CHAPTER XII.

THE STORY CONTINUED. WHAT FOLLOWED EXPULSION. DESPERATE WORD FIGHTING. ABUSE.

I was expelled on a Saturday afternoon. I was unable to stay till the closing scene, as I had an engagement to preach anniversary sermons on the Sunday, some thirty miles away. But the news soon reached me, and I received it with strange and indescribable emotions. I felt that something very important had happened,—that I was placed in a new and serious position, and was entering on a new and untried way of life; but I little dreamt what the results would be. I expected an eventful future, but not the kind of future that was really waiting for me. I anticipated trials, and sorrows, and great changes; but how strangely different the realities have proved from what I anticipated in my fevered dreams! But I had strong faith in God, and a firm trust in His all-perfect Providence, and no one saw me tremble or turn pale.

I had not been expelled long when I found myself face to face with a terrible host of trials. Some who had promised to stand by my side took fright, and left me to my fate. Some found their interests were endangered by their attachment to me, and fell away. Some were influenced by the threats of their masters, and some by the tears and entreaties of their kindred, and reluctantly joined the ranks of my enemies. Some thought I should have yielded a point or two, and were vexed at what they called my obstinacy. There were fearful and melancholy changes. People who had always heretofore received me with smiles of welcome, now looked cold and gloomy. Some raged, some wept, and some embraced me with unspeakable tenderness; while some wished me dead, and said it had been better for me if I had never been born.

One man, a person of considerable influence, who had encouraged me in my movements, and joined me in lamenting the shortcomings of the Connexion, and in condemning the conduct of my opponents, no sooner saw that I was

Hosted by Google

doomed, than he sent me a most unfeeling letter. I met the postman and got the letter in the street, and read it as I walked along. It pained me terribly, but it comforted me to think that it had not fallen into the hands of my delicate and sensitive wife. That no other eye might see it, and no other soul be afflicted with the treachery and cruelty of the writer, I tore it in pieces, and threw it into the Tyne, and kept the matter a secret from those whose souls it might have shocked too rudely for endurance.

Another man, who had said to me a short time before my expulsion, that whoever else might close their doors against me, his would always be open, proved as faithless as the basest. I called one day at his shop. As soon as he saw me, he turned away his eyes, and stood motionless and speechless behind the counter, as if agitated with painful and unutterable passion. I saw his family move hurriedly from the room behind the shop to another room, as if afraid lest I should step forward into their presence. The man kept his door open sure enough, his *shop* door; but his heart was closed, and he never spoke to me more as long as he lived.

One day I went with a brother of mine to the house of a tradesman near Gateshead, a member and a leading man in the New Connexion, on a matter of business. As soon as the person saw me, he began to abuse me in a very extravagant manner. I had always had a favorable opinion of the man, and I quietly answered, "I can excuse your severity; for you no doubt are acting conscientiously." "That is more than I believe you are doing," he answered, and turned away.

There was great excitement throughout the whole Connexion. And while many were transported with rage, great numbers took my part. The feeling in my favor was both strong and very general. One-third of the whole Connexion probably separated from my opponents, and formed themselves into a new society. Several ministers joined them, and had not the chapels been secured to the Conference, it is probable that the greater portion of the community would have seceded. As it was, the existence of the Body seemed in peril, and the leaders found it necessary to strain every nerve to save it from utter destruction.

Hosted by Google

And they were not particular as to the means they used. Before my expulsion even my enemies had considered me a virtuous, godly man, and acknowledged me to be a most laborious and successful minister. Now they fabricated and circulated all manner of slanderous reports respecting me. One day they gave it out that I had broken my teetotal pledge, and had been taken up drunk out of the gutter, and wheeled home in a wheelbarrow. Then it was discovered that I had not broken my pledge, but I had been seen nibbling a little Spanish juice, so it was said I was eating opium, and killing myself as fast as the poison could destroy me.

At another time it was said I had gone stark mad, and had been smothered to death between two beds. A friend came, pale and dismally sorrowful, to condole with my wife on the dreadful catastrophe, and was himself almost mad with delight when he found that I was in the parlor writing, as well and as sane as usual.

Then it was reported that I had applied for a place in the ministry among the Calvinists, though I had up to that time professed views at variance with Calvinism, and had even objected to be a hired minister. When I called for the names of the parties to whom I had made the offer, and engaged to give a large reward if my slanderers would produce them, they found it was another Joseph that had applied for the place, and not Joseph Barker. But the death of one slander seemed to be the birth of two or three fresh ones. And sometimes opposite slanders sprang up together. "If he had been a good man," said one, "he would have stopped in the Connexion quietly, and waited for reform!" "If he had been an honest man," said another, "he would have left the Connexion long ago, and not remained in a community that he thought in error." I had been "too hasty" for one, and "too slow" for another. One wrote to assure me that I should die a violent death in less than eighteen months. Another said he foresaw me lying on my death-bed, with Satan sitting on my breast, ready to carry away my soul to eternal torments. One sent me a number of my pamphlets blotted and torn, packed up with a piece of wood, for the carriage of which I was charged from four to five shillings. Another sent me a num-

Hosted by Google

ber of my publications defaced in another way, with offensive enclosures that do not admit of description.

At one time it was reported that I had died suddenly at Leeds. "After lecturing there one night," the story said, "a certain person got upon the platform to oppose me, and I was so frightened, that I first turned pale, then fainted, and in two hours breathed my last." I was preaching at Penrith, in Cumberland, some seventy or eighty miles away, at the time I was said to have died at Leeds.

Some weeks later it was rumored that I had destroyed myself at Otley. The maker of the tale in this case had been very particular, and given his story the appearance of great truthfulness. He said I had gone to lecture at Otley, and on my arrival there, was found to be more than usually thoughtful and depressed. I lectured with my usual freedom and power, but seemed oppressed with some mysterious sorrow. After the lecture, instead of going along with my host, I unaccountably disappeared, and though my friends sought for me and inquired for me all about the town, I was nowhere to be found. In the morning, as the son of my host was seeking for some cows in a wood on the side of the Chevin, he found me dead and cold, with my throat cut, and the razor in my hand with which I had done the deadly deed. The news soon spread, and my body was taken back to Otley, where an inquest was held. The verdict was that I had died by my own hand, in a fit of temporary insanity.

These stories were printed and published, and circulated through the whole country. They were shouted aloud in the street opposite my own door, in the hearing of my wife and family, during my absence. At first my wife and children were terribly alarmed when they heard men crying, "The melancholy death of Mr. Joseph Barker." But they got so used to me dying and destroying myself in time, that they took such matters more calmly, especially as I always came again, and appeared no worse for the terrible deaths through which I had been made to pass.

For a year or two my enemies published a periodical called *The Beacon*, every page of which they filled with malignant slanders. The loss of members exasperated them past measure. The danger which threatened the Con-

Hosted by Google

nexion drove them mad. They took up evil reports respecting me without consideration. They looked on all I did with an evil eye, and recklessly charged me with wicked devices which had no existence but in their own disturbed imaginations. One charged me with having acted inconsistently with my views with regard to the use of money, and another with having acted inconsistently with my belief with regard to baptism. Any tale to my discredit was welcome, and the supply of slanderous tales seemed infinite. They wrested my words, they belied my deeds, they misinterpreted my motives, they misrepresented the whole course of my life, and the whole texture of my character.

One of the pitiful slanders circulated by my enemies was the following. My custom was, when I went out to lecture, or to preach anniversary sermons, to charge only my coach fares, rendering my services gratis. For eighteen years I never charged a penny either for preaching or lecturing. But the people of Berry Brow, near Huddersfield, said I had charged them thirty shillings for preaching their anniversary sermons, and the Conference party took the trouble to spread the contemptible charge through the Connexion.

The facts of the case were these: I had an engagement to preach anniversary sermons at Hanley, in the Staffordshire Potteries. The Berry Brow people heard of this, and as I had to pass their place on my way to Hanley, they requested me to spend a Sabbath with them, and preach *their* anniversary sermons. I did so, and charged them thirty shillings, about one-third of the expenses of my journey, taking the other two-thirds from the Hanley people. This was all.

Of course such matters would not be worth naming, if it were not to show how much there was in the conduct of my persecutors to give me a dislike to their character, and to prejudice me against their views.

That you may have an idea of my labors as a preacher, take the following account of one week's work, when I was lecturing against the infidel Socialists, previous to my expulsion. I had preached three times on the Sunday, walked six miles, and attended to several other duties. At half past

Hosted by Google

ten at night I started by stage coach for Bolton, a hundred and fifty miles away. I travelled all night, and all next day, outside the coach. It was winter, and the weather was very cold. About six in the evening I reached Bolton. At half past seven I began my lecture, in a place crowded almost to suffocation. After the lecture, I had an hour and a half's debate. Between eleven and twelve I went to bed. I spent next day mostly in writing. At half past seven I began my second lecture, with a congregation more closely packed than the night before. The lecture was followed with a somewhat longer debate. This continued five nights. On Friday night I got to bed about twelve. At half past two I started in an open gig for Manchester, twelve miles off. The morning was very cold. There was a severe frost and a thick fog. At Manchester I took the coach for Newcastle, and I rode outside all day, until half past ten at night. The Sunday following I preached three times again. And in this way I labored for nearly two years. I paid all my own expenses. I also engaged and paid a person to preach for me, and to attend to my other duties in the circuit, during the week. If there was a loss at my meetings I bore it myself; never asking any one for aid. And at times I had heavy losses. At Manchester once, after giving five lectures, I was eleven pounds out of pocket. At Birmingham I had a loss of thirty-seven pounds on five lectures. That was about the hardest week I ever had. My tongue got rather white. My food lost its relish. My thoughts kept me awake after I lay down in bed sometimes, and sometimes awoke me after I had gone to sleep. I caught myself drawing long breaths at times. Money came into my head at prayer, though none came into my pocket. I did not even ask for that. I met with Combe's work on digestion and read it, but it did not help me much, either in digesting my food, or my heavy loss. But I made no complaints. I did not even tell my wife till long after, when I was prosperous and comfortable again. And none of those who heard my lectures, saw in me any sign of discouragement. I lectured to my small audience as earnestly as if the vast amphitheatre had been crowded. And I paid the whole loss out of my own pocket, asking help from neither stranger nor friend.

Hosted by Google

Just about this time Mr. Hulme, the son-in-law of my chief persecutor, set afloat a story that I was getting immensely rich by my lectures, and demanded that I should hand over my gains to the Connexional funds. I could hardly help wishing that he had been compelled to take one-half of my Manchester and Birmingham gains.

I never charged more than two-pence, I seldom charged more than a penny, for admission to my lectures: but such were the crowds that attended, and such was the readiness of my friends in different places to help me without charge, that in nine cases out of ten I had a surplus. I had forty pounds in hand with which to pay the loss of thirty-seven at Birmingham. Besides, I sold large quantities of my pamphlets, and they yielded me a profit, though I sold my works eighty or ninety per cent. cheaper than my envious brethren sold theirs.

After my expulsion I worked harder than I had done before. The following is only a part of one week's work. I preached three times on the Sunday; twice to immense crowds in the open air. The time between the three meetings I spent in talking, writing, and walking. I walked fifteen miles. On Monday I wrote a lengthy article for my periodical, the *Christian Investigator*. At night I lectured to a crowded audience, and had a three hours' discussion after. About one I got to bed. At five I was up to take the coach to Manchester. At Manchester I carried a heavy pack two miles to the railway station. I went by train to Sandbach, then walked about twenty-three miles to Longton, carrying my carpet bag, and some thirty pounds weight of books, on my shoulder. It was a hot day in June. At Longton I preached an hour and a quarter to about five thousand people in the open air, and had a lengthy discussion after. How I slept, I forget. I believe I was feverish through the night. In the morning my nose bled freely, and I was better. I walked six, eight, or ten miles daily, carrying my bag and books along with me, and preaching, or lecturing and discussing, every night. I did this daily for weeks, and months, and years. And I never charged a penny for my labors. And I had no salary. I supported myself and my family by the sale of my cheap publications.

Yet one of the slanders circulated by my enemies was,

Hosted by Google

as I said, that I acted inconsistently with my published views on the use of money. I taught, as Wesley had taught, and as Jesus and Paul had taught, that a man should not lay up *for himself* treasures on earth,—that money was a trust from God, to be used in His service, for the good of mankind. And I acted on these principles. I did not lay up a penny for myself on earth. I employed all I received in doing good, hardly spending enough on myself and family to purchase the barest necessaries. But my enemies found I had placed fifty pounds *on interest*, in the hands of Mr. Townsend; and away went the charge of inconsistency, hypocrisy, and what not, through the country. There was no inconsistency at all in what I had done.

It was a principle with me, never to go into debt. And my plan was, never to begin to print a book, till I had, in the first place, got the money ready to pay the expense of printing, and, in the second place, reconciled myself to lose the money in case the book did not sell. At the time I placed the fifty pounds in the hands of Mr. T., I was preparing to print a book that would cost me thrice that amount. I did print it, and paid the expense in cash, according to my principles and plan. I follow the same plan still: my printers like it; and so do I. I owed a dollar and a half at the close of last year. The thought of it troubled me, not much, but still a little, during the watch-night services at Siloam church. I had only owed the sum ten hours, and I paid it next morning, but still, the thought of the debt made the ending of the old year, and the beginning of the new one, a trifle less happy than they might have been, if I had been entirely straight with all the world.

In some cases, when I went out to lecture, the leading ministers of the Connexion would come to my meetings, and exciting discussions followed. These injured the Connexion still more, for I invariably gained the sympathy of the audience. On some occasions my enemies behaved in such a manner as to provoke my audiences past endurance, and uproar followed; and the greatest coolness on my part, and the employment of all my influence, were necessary to keep the more excitable of my friends from resorting to violence.

Very curious incidents took place sometimes, strangely

Hosted by Google

confounding my opponents, and making the impression on my friends, and on myself as well, that God had specially interfered on my behalf. On more than one occasion, when discreditable tales were told of me by my opponents, some one in the audience who knew the facts, would rise and testify in my behalf, and publicly convict my slanderers of falsehood. In one case, at Dudley, Mr. Bakewell, who had always taken a leading part against me, charged me before a crowded audience, with having baptized a child of certain parents, at Hawarden in Wales, a hundred miles away, after I had declared my belief that it was improper to baptize children. He adduced some testimony in support of his statement, which seemed to satisfy many in the audience that I had been guilty of inconsistency. What could I do? I had nothing to oppose to his testimony and his pretended proofs, but my solemn denial of the statement. Most happily for me, as soon as my opponent took his seat, a lady rose, towards the farther end of the room, with a baby in her arms. "I wish to speak," said the lady. The people near her helped her to step upon a seat, that she might be seen and heard to better advantage. "*I* am the mother referred to by Mr. Bakewell," said the lady, "and this is the child. Mr. Bakewell's statement is untrue. Mr. Barker did not sprinkle my child. He only named it, and asked God's blessing on it. Here is my husband, and he can testify to the truth of this statement." The lady stepped down and the husband rose. "I am the Richard Burrows mentioned by Mr. Bakewell. This is my wife, and that is our child. Mr. Barker did not baptize it. Mr. Bakewell's statement is false." That settled the question. The feeling against my slanderer was tremendous. The people would not hear him speak another word.

It had so happened that Mr. and Mrs. Burrows had been obliged to remove from Wales to the neighborhood of Dudley, and had just arrived at their new home. Hearing that I was lecturing at Dudley, they hastened to the meeting, and got there just in time to hear my opponent mention their names in support of his charge of inconsistency. What could be more natural than that I and my friends should regard this remarkable and happy incident as a gracious interposition of Providence in our behalf?

Hosted by Google

The conduct of my opponents had a most injurious effect not only on my own mind, but on the minds of my wife and children. We came to look on New Connexion Methodist preachers as some of the worst of men,—as the very essence or embodiment of deceit and malignity; and our respect for Methodist preachers generally, and even for Methodism itself, was greatly abated. The consequence was, we were prepared to move in almost any direction that would take us farther away from our old associates, and we all became, to some extent, anti-Methodistical in our feelings and sentiments.

Exciting meetings like the one at Dudley took place in almost every part of the country. The numbers attending them were so great that no room could hold them, so that I generally had to speak in the open air. And I lectured almost every night, and often through the day as well; and every lecture was followed with discussion. When opponents did not rise to assail me, friends rose to consult me, and our evening meetings often continued till nearly midnight. And I preached three times on a Sunday. And after every meeting there was a crowd of friends anxious to talk with me, or have my counsel about the formation or management of societies. Some had heard strange stories about me, and wanted to know whether they were true or not. Others had had discussions with opponents, and wished to tell me how they had fared. Some had been puzzled with passages of Scripture quoted by opponents, and they wished to know my views of their meaning. Some were sick, and wanted my prayers. Some wanted prescriptions as well as prayers, and I was obliged to be a physician as well as a preacher and reformer. Reports of cures wrought by my means led many to believe I had the gift of healing, and sufferers sought my aid wherever I made my appearance.

While one-half of each day was taken up with talking, another half was taken up with writing. I had hundreds of letters to write, and hundreds upon hundreds of all kinds of letters to read. I had, besides, a new periodical on hand, for which I was expected to provide the principal part of the articles. And special attacks on me or on my views required a constant succession of pamphlets.

Hosted by Google

In addition to my press of work, I had no small share of anxiety. My wife was greatly tried, and saw no prospect of a speedy end to her trials. When expelled I was living in the preacher's house, and had the preacher's furniture, and many in the circuit considered that I had a right to them, and advised me to keep them, and set the Conference partly at defiance. I however refused to retain possession of property with a doubtful title, and gave all up. And now I had not a chair on which to sit, nor a bed on which to sleep. And the little money I had was wanted for the printers. My friends provided for me in a way, but not in the way to satisfy an anxious mother. One child was taken by one family, and another by another, while I and my wife were accommodated by a third. And one of the children was unkindly treated, and the rest were not content; and no house could be a home to my wife which was not her own; and no condition could make her content while deprived of the company of her children. And I saw her heart was the seat of fearful conflicts.

For several months I went through my arduous and ceaseless labors, and my varied and exhausting trials, without apparent injury to my health. At length, however, continual excitement, intense thought, ceaseless anxiety, the foul air of close and crowded rooms, perpetual travelling, loss of sleep, lack of domestic comforts, unhealthy food, and trials of other kinds without end, so exhausted me, that I found it difficult to rise from my chair, or to steady myself on my feet. To walk was quite a task,—a really painful one. I had a difficulty in putting one foot before the other. It was a labor to drag myself along. A walk of two or three miles quite wearied me. And when I got to my journey's end, my lungs lacked power to utter words; my brain lacked energy to supply thoughts; and lecturing and preaching became a weariness. When I sat down to write, my pen seemed reluctant to touch the paper. My mind shrank back from its task. In my ignorance of the laws of life, I charged myself with idleness, and tried to spur myself on to renewed activity. The attempt was vain. One afternoon I ventured to lie down and treat myself to an after-dinner nap. I slept three hours. I had no engagement that night, and feeling still unaccountably sleepy, I slipped

Hosted by Google

off to bed about eight o'clock. I slept till nearly nine next morning. I slept an hour or two more after dinner. At night I slept about ten hours more. Next day I felt as if my strength was running over. I could do anything. My pen seemed to point to the paper of itself, as if anxious to be writing. Walking was a pleasure. I could preach or lecture without effort. Words, thoughts, and feelings were all at hand to do my bidding. What I had charged on myself as idleness, was strengthlessness, the result of sheer exhaustion.

I had suffered so much from the intolerance of my old colleagues, that I now resolved to be subject to no authority whatever but God and my own conscience. And I kept my resolution. I would neither rule nor be ruled. The extreme of priestly tyranny, from which I had suffered so grievously, had begotten in me the extreme of religious license. I have seen since, that a man may have too much liberty, as well as too little; too little restraint as well as too much; and that a church without authority and discipline must inevitably lose itself in confusion and ruin. We are none of us fit for unlimited liberty: we all need the supervision, and counsels, and admonitions, of our Christian brethren.

After my separation from the Methodist New Connexion I became the pastor of a church in Newcastle, which had left the Connexion on account of my expulsion. The trustees had legal and rightful possession of the large and nice new chapel there, and they and the other officials of the church were both dissatisfied with the doings of Conference, and desirous to secure me as their minister. They were aware of my admiration of the Quakers, and of my leaning towards some of their peculiar views and customs. They were also acquainted with my way of preaching, for I had travelled in that Circuit some years before, and I had preached for them frequently while stationed at Gateshead. They knew my character too, and were acquainted with all my conflicts with the ruling party in the Connexion from which I had been expelled. And though they did not think exactly as I thought on every point, they saw nothing in my views but what they could freely tolerate. They were satisfied that I was conscientious; and they con-

Hosted by Google

sidered my general deportment to be highly exemplary. And they knew I was a hard-working and successful minister. One of the leading members was a printer, and had been consulted by the Annual Committee of the New Connexion in reference to my communications to them about the publication of cheap books by the Book-room. They thought my statements were extravagant: he told them they were very near the truth, if not the truth itself. This gentleman was one of the most eager now to arrange for my settlement as a minister in Newcastle. The officers and members of the church generally were disposed to consult my feelings and meet my views. They did not require me to be a hired or salaried minister. They knew the wants of my family, and they would provide for them. They would appoint a person to baptize children. They were not particular about theological niceties. They had read my writings; they were acquainted with the controversies that had taken place between me and my opponents; and they were satisfied that I was right on every point of importance; and that was enough. And they liked my simple, earnest, practical style of preaching. So everything was comfortably arranged.

We united on the principle laid down in my article on "*Toleration, Human Creeds,*" &c. The Bible was our creed: the Bible was our law-book; though we were still, on the whole, methodistical, both in doctrine and discipline. Numbers of other churches were organized on the same principle, in various parts of the country; and several young preachers left the body to which I had belonged, or were expelled on account of their attachment to me, and became their ministers. And the churches prospered. Numbers of people joined them, both from the world and from other religious communities.

For nearly two years things went on very happily at Newcastle, and the church was very prosperous. I labored to the utmost extent of my powers. I preached twice every Sunday to my own congregation, and once to another congregation at Gateshead, or in the country. I visited the churches also in every part of the land, preaching and lecturing continually.

All this time my old opponents continued their abuse.

Hosted by Google

Though I relinquished no Christian doctrine, and added to the truth no dreams or speculations of my own, but employed myself continually in preaching the great practical principles of the Gospel, and in urging my hearers to love and good works, they assailed me with the bitterest hatred. And the more the churches with which I was connected prospered, the more furiously my enemies raged.

And when people left other denominations to unite with my friends, ministers and members of those denominations joined my opponents in their evil work. They preached abusive sermons and published abusive pamphlets. There was eager, angry controversy on every hand. Hard words were used on both sides. The feelings of both parties were heated to a high pitch. And as is usual in such cases, both parties, under the influence of their passions, came to the conclusion that their opponents were neither sound in doctrine, nor good in character.

Towards the close of the second year I got into trouble at Newcastle. A religious reformer of the name of George Bird came to the town. His father was a clergyman in the Church of England, and he himself was rector of Cumberworth. He was recommended to me by some of my friends who lived near Cumberworth, and as he was wishful to spend some time in Newcastle and the neighborhood, I took him into my house, and gave him a home. He had published a book on the Reform of the Church of England, urging the abolition of a number of abuses, and recommending the restoration of what he considered true Christian discipline. His idea was, that Christians should meet for religious *worship apart* from people of the world,—that though preachers might *preach* to mixed audiences, they should reserve their singing and praying, and all that was strictly worship, for assemblies of Christians alone. He recommended that the members of the church should meet first, in a place apart, or in a part of the chapel marked off for themselves, and go through their devotions all alone, and that the sermon, addressed both to believers and unbelievers, should be quite a separate service. He had passages of Scripture, and church tradition, and considerations of fitness and propriety, by which he recommended his doctrine, and to some they proved convincing. I began my-

Hosted by Google

self, after thinking the matter over for awhile, to have a leaning towards his views. My friends could so far tolerate the new views, that they allowed Mr. Bird to preach in their chapels, letting some one else conduct the singing and praying parts of the service. But when they found that their own minister began to look with favor on the new plan, they became alarmed. They could tolerate peculiarities in others, but they were not disposed to appear before the world as reformers and innovaters themselves. Nor would they allow their minister to go any farther in the way of reform than he had gone before they had accepted him as their pastor. They had reconciled themselves to the changes of which he had been the subject previous to his special connection with them, but they would have no new ones. He might go back a little if he pleased, but not forwards.

Both my friends and I were placed in a trying position. I was bent on compliance with whatever seemed to be the requirements of the Gospel, and my friends, who had no misgivings on the subject of public worship, were resolved not to tolerate a change. I kept the usual course as long as I could do so without self-condemnation, but at length was constrained to change. One Sunday night I preached from the concluding words of the Sermon on the Mount,—"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." I reviewed the sayings of Christ referred to in the text. I dwelt at some length on the passage about praying in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets. The congregation was very large, and the sermon was unusually impressive. Some said they had never heard me preach with so much power. As I drew towards a close, I referred again to the words on public prayer, and gave what appeared to me to be their

Hosted by Google

meaning. I remarked, that I felt bound to comply with what I believed to be the command of the Saviour, and that I must therefore decline to conclude the service in the usual way, by a public prayer, and request the disciples of Christ to retire to their homes and secret places to pray.

The result was exceedingly painful. The confusion was dreadful. Some, who had never thought on the subject before, and who had probably listened to me that evening without comprehending properly my meaning, were horrified. The officers of the church, who had accepted me as their minister in the belief that I should never try them by anything new in my views or proceedings, were grieved beyond measure. One of them said to me at a meeting the following evening: "You have committed a crime, compared with which the sin of him who betrayed his Lord for silver, was honor and piety!" This, of course, was madnesss, if not blasphemy. But it helps to show the fearful difficulties that lie in the way of the man who feels himself called to be a religious reformer. And it tends to show the tempest of excitement in which, for so long a period, it was my lot to live.

The result of this last step in my reforming career was, that almost all the richer and more influential members of the church deserted me, and some even of the less influential followed their example. This however did not change my determination to do what I believed to be the will of God. Nor did it dispose me to hesitate longer before making changes when they seemed to be called for by the teachings of Christ. On the contrary, it led me to resolve, that I would hold myself more at liberty to follow the revelations of truth and duty than ever. I blamed myself for having accepted the situation of a regular minister. blamed myself for having allowed myself to be influenced so much by a regard to the judgments and feelings of others. I felt a kind of pleasure at length, when I found the leading friends who had held me so much in check, were gone. I attributed their departure to my fidelity to Christ, and to my growing conformity to His likeness; and I resolved to labor more than ever to come to the perfection of Christian manhood, "to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." I comforted myself with the thought that Jesus

Hosted by Google

had been deserted, betrayed, and persecuted, before me; and felt happy in the assurance, that if I "suffered with Him, I should also be glorified with Him."

I now resolved to speak and write and act more freely than ever. I would no longer keep my thoughts to myself till I was thoroughly convinced of their truth, but submit them to the consideration of my friends as soon as they assumed the appearance of probability. I would think aloud. I would search to the bottom of all things, and make known the result without reserve. I would favor a free and fearless discussion of every subject. And I would reduce to practice everything inculcated by Christ and His Apostles, however much at variance it might be with the customs of the Church. I would rid myself of prejudice. I would take nothing on trust. Old things should now, at last, pass away, unless they were found to form part of the doctrine of Christ; and all things should become new. And what I purposed, I did, to the best of my ability. I arranged for meetings of the church, at which we sang and prayed, and endeavored to instruct and comfort one another, and provoke each other to love and good works. When this church meeting was over, I ascended the pulpit, and addressed the public congregation. We changed the manner of conducting class-meetings, encouraging the members to read hymns, or portions of Scripture, or extracts from any instructive book, or to speak to each other for comfort or improvement. I would be no longer *the* teacher of the church, but only *one* of its teachers.

That I might be able to support my family without the aid of the church, and so feel myself thoroughly free and independent, I resolved to commence business as a printer. I bought a press, and type, and all the other requisites of a printing-office, and set to work. Elizabeth Pease, a good kind Quakeress of Darlington, gave me thirty pounds to help me in my undertaking, and others, nearer at hand, assisted me according to their ability. I engaged a man to work for me, and teach me how to work myself, for I was quite a stranger to the business. I soon was able both to set up type and work the press, though the pressure of other work prevented me from excelling in either of those lines. Before long I had two men at work. But my

Hosted by Google

workmen were not so faithful as they should have been, and it cost me more to print my works myself, than it had done to get them printed by others. I got a foreman, but he used my office to carry on a business of his own, instead of doing what he could for mine, and I was obliged to turn him off, and pay him a considerable sum to keep him from troubling me with a law-suit. A short time after, a very unpromising-looking young man came and asked me for a place in my printing establishment. He was hardly a young man, in fact, but just a half-taught random-looking kind of boy. I asked what he could do. To my unspeakable astonishment he told me that the place he wanted was that of foreman. I smiled, and looked on the poor creature as a simpleton. But though he seemed a little disconcerted, he was not to be abashed. He told me, that if I would give him a trial, he would let me see whether he could manage the office or not. "But how can you manage the men?" said I. Nothing however would satisfy the poor boy but a trial, and I, under some kind of influence, agreed to give him one. What the men thought when he took his place, I don't know; but they seemed to act on the principle, that as I had made him foreman, they must obey his orders; and obey him they did, and to my agreeable surprise, everything went on in a satisfactory manner. The youthful foreman, who turned out to be a sensible, modest, hard-working, honest young man, did well from the first, and improved every year, and remained with me, giving satisfaction both to me and to my men, so long as I continued in business.

I had many fearful trials to pass through after I offended the leading members of my congregation by giving up singing and prayer at public meetings, and a heavy loss entailed on me by the dishonesty of one of those leading members was not the least.

Ever since the time when I first became an author, I had acted as my own publisher and bookseller, sending out parcels to my friends, keeping accounts, and doing the whole work of a Book-room. When I engaged to be minister of the church in Newcastle, and became servant of the newly-formed churches all over the country, Mr. Blackwell, the printer referred to on page 175, advised me to put the book-

Hosted by Google

selling business into the hands of Mr. Townsend, another leading official of the church. "You have work enough," said he, "and too much, in preaching, lecturing, writing, and travelling, and Mr. Townsend can do the book-selling better than you. He is a business man; he understands book-keeping; and he will conduct the business in an orderly and efficient manner." It had always been a principle with me never to go into debt, and I said to Mr. Blackwell, who was then my printer, "If you will give me a guarantee that no debt shall be incurred,—that you will never print anything till Mr. Townsend has paid you for all work previously printed, I will agree to your proposal." He gave me his word that he would do exactly as I requested. Mr. Townsend was accordingly made wholesale agent for my new periodical, and for all my other publications, and all my stock of books was placed in his hands. For fifteen or eighteen months I gave myself no concern about matters of business, trusting to Mr. Blackwell to keep things right, according to his pledge.

Mr. Townsend had another business besides my book concern, the china and earthenware business, and about eighteen months after my business was placed in his hands, he went into Scotland to dispose of a quantity of his surplus stock. He had only been gone a few days before word came that he was dead. It then came out that Mr. Blackwell had allowed him to run up a debt of nearly seven hundred pounds for printing. It also came out that Mr. Townsend was insolvent. He had been in difficulties for years, and he had used the money he had received for my books to prevent his creditors from making him a bankrupt. His journey to Scotland was his last shift, and failing in that, he had taken opiates, it was said, to such an extent, as to cause death. The dreadful revelations that were laid before me shocked and troubled me beyond measure, and I knew not what to do. Mr. Blackwell, through whose neglect or unfaithfulness the debt had been incurred, exhorted me not to be alarmed, assuring me that he should never trouble me for the money. So I set to work to gather up the fragments of my property, and re-organize the business. I got in what money I could from the agents, and gave it, along with all I could earn, to Mr. Blackwell, to reduce

Hosted by Google

the debt, though it was not in reality a debt of mine. I gave him also a sum belonging to my wife, which she had just received as a legacy. I gave him all that came into my hands, except a trifle that I spent in procuring food for my family; and in eight months I had reduced the debt to two hundred and thirty pounds.

It was while I was exerting myself to pay off this debt that I offended the leaders of my congregation by giving up public worship. The person who said that in doing so, "I had been guilty of a crime, compared with which that of Judas in selling his Master, was honor and piety," was this same Mr. Blackwell. When I began to print for myself, he demanded the instant payment of the remaining two hundred and thirty pounds, and followed the demand by legal proceedings. A friend, Mr. John Hindhaugh, who had heard how I was situated, and who had also heard that Mr. Blackwell had said that he would soon put a stop to my printing, went and paid the amount demanded, and brought me the receipt, and said, that if ever I found myself able, I might repay him the amount, but that I must by no means put myself to any inconvenience. In course of time I repaid my friend, and was once more out of debt.

It was just while tried by this sad affair, that I formed the resolution to throw off all restraints of prevailing creeds and customs, and enter on a career of wholesale and untrammelled investigation and discussion. I was not in the fittest state of mind to do justice to the forms of Christianity in favor with the churches. On the contrary, the influences to which I had been long subjected, and the peculiar state of excitement in which I was still living, could hardly fail to carry me into extremes. No matter, I set to work. I printed thousands upon thousands of hand-bills, announcing a three months' convention and free discussion in my chapel, and had them posted and distributed all round the country. Free admission and freedom of speech were promised to all comers. Among the subjects announced for discussion were, the Trinity, the Godhead of Christ, the Atonement, Natural Depravity, Hereditary Guilt, Eternal Torments, Everlasting Destruction, Justification by Faith alone, the Nature of Saving Faith, What is a Christian? Trust in the Merits of Christ, Instantaneous Regen-

Hosted by Google

eration, Christian Perfection, the direct Witness of the Spirit, the Sabbath Question, Non-resistance, Peace, War, and Human Governments, Law-Suits, the Credit System, Toleration and Human Creeds, the Church, the Hired Ministry, Public Prayer, Public Worship generally, Preaching, Sunday Schools, Freedom of Thought, Freedom of Conscience, Class-Meetings, and the Duty of the Church to its Poor Members.

The chapel was kept open every day, and every day, when not called out of town, I delivered one or two lectures on one of those subjects, stating my own views on the point, and my reasons for holding them, and then calling on any one that might differ from me, to state his views in reply. The chapel was generally crowded, and the discussions were often very animated. Persons of various denominations took part in them, and people came from almost every part of the country to witness the proceedings. My principal opponent, for a portion of the time, was George Bird, the rector of Cumberworth, who had inoculated me with his views on public worship. He was very orthodox on many points, while I, on some points, was leaning towards Latitudinarianism. We had, at times, very exciting contests. Mr. Bird was exceedingly anxious to gain a victory, both for himself and for his views. And he was not particular as to the means he employed to accomplish his object. He was very unfair. He could not, or he would not, refrain from personal abuse, nor from misrepresentations of my views and statements. I was severe enough in my criticisms, but I never was knowingly, and I do not think I was often even unintentionally, unjust to an opponent. I never charged people with saying what they did not say, and I never forced a meaning on their words which they were not intended to express. And if at any time an opponent charged me with misquoting his words, or with misrepresenting his meaning, I always accepted his corrections or explanations. Nor did I indulge in personal abuse. Nor did I lose my temper. *I did my utmost to be just to all*, and when I could not exhibit much esteem or love for an opponent, I tried to be respectful.

The records of those long-continued and strange debates are, I am sorry to say, lost. But while they were proceed-

Hosted by Google

ing I drifted farther away, on some points, from the views maintained by orthodox communities. I am not aware however that I went much further than Wesley went during the latter years of his life. I found, not only in Scripture, but in the sermons of Wesley, and in the writings of Baxter, who was a favorite with Wesley, what seemed to me fully to justify all that I had taught on the great doctrines of Christianity up to this period.

I gave up the *Christian Investigator* at the end of two years, and as two of my friends were anxious to publish a periodical, I refrained for a time from commencing another, to give them a better chance of success. I also helped them by writing for them, at their request, a number of articles for the earlier numbers of their work. Their attempt however proved a failure. The work contained a heap of Antinomian and Millenarian nonsense, and my readers had no taste for such stuff; and the work was given up, and the Editors shortly after left me and my friends, and joined the Plymouth Brethren, repaying me for my kindness by treachery and abuse. One of them published a tract when he took himself away, exhorting my friends to be on their guard lest they should be led by me into anti-christian error. Their conduct towards me altogether, as I thought, was unjust and dishonorable, and though they are now both dead, I can think of no good excuse for the way in which they acted. But God is judge.

I now laid aside the name of *Methodist* and adopted that of *Christian*, and I commenced a new periodical, bearing the same title. I made it, as I had made my other periodicals, the organ of my own mind, the vehicle of my own thoughts on every subject of importance that engaged my attention. My writing was simply free and friendly talk with my readers on matters in which we were all greatly interested. And the work contains the history of the changes which took place in my views during the period of its publication.

While publishing *The Christian*, I published a multitude of pamphlets. In answer to a pamphlet by the Rev. W. Cooke, in which I was roughly and unjustly handled, I published seven letters entitled *Truth and Reform against the World*, signing myself *A Christian*. In these letters I

Hosted by Google

spoke with the greatest freedom both of myself and of my opponents, as well as on a great variety of other subjects. I exposed a number of what seemed extravagant or unguarded statements made by my assailant with regard to the Scriptures. I also published a work on *The Hired Ministry*. My tracts on *Saving Faith* and *The Atonement* came out about the same time. My aim in these latter publications was to free the subject of Saving Faith and the doctrine of the Atonement from needless mystery, by separating from the teachings of Christ and the Apostles on those points, the bewildering and mischievous additions of ignorant theologians. I did not deny the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ, but only showed that the faith in Christ spoken of in the New Testament was simply a belief in Him as the Messiah, leading us to receive and obey His teachings, and to trust in Him for salvation. Nor did I deny the doctrine of redemption or atonement; but simply endeavored to put what the New Testament said on these subjects in its true light. In most of those works, if not in all of them, there are evidences of undue excitement, and in many of them there are passages which, in one's calmer and more candid mood, one is obliged to condemn.

I extended my investigations to all religious subjects, endeavoring to bring my views and proceedings on every point into perfect harmony with the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. I also did my best, in connection with my friends, to carry into practice in our church at Newcastle what we regarded as the New Testament principles of discipline and church government. The following were among our regulations:—We would have no fixed payments. All must be given freely. There must be no charge for admission to the church feasts. We would support our poor members. We would deal with offenders according to the instructions of Christ: first, tell them of their faults between them and us alone, &c., &c.

We encountered many difficulties in our attempts to carry out some of our principles. Some, that were able to contribute, were too selfish to do so, and left the expenses of the church to be met by the generous few. They would eat like gluttons at the church feasts, but give nothing towards

Hosted by Google

paying for the provisions. Some seemed to enter the church to get supported in idleness out of its funds. This seemed to be the case especially with a blind beggar. He spared no pains in making known his connection with the church, and its generosity in supporting him, to the public. This brought in a number of others who were wishful to be supported. But many of these people, after joining the church, refused to work. It was plain that we must either give up the attempt to carry out our generous principles, or else adopt some method of testing people before admitting them as members, and some wise system of discipline and government with regard to those already admitted. But we had said so much about unlimited liberty, that we could do neither the one nor the other without breaking up the church and building it up anew; and it seemed too late to do that. So we dragged along as well as we could. Some lost patience, and went to other churches. Some came to the conclusion that Christianity as laid down in the New Testament was impracticable, and so became skeptical. Some kept aloof from all the churches, but still retained their faith in Christianity, and their attachment to the principles to which we had given prominence.

At one period I lectured frequently on Peace. The Quakers aided me in obtaining rooms for my lectures, and supplied me with money to pay my travelling expenses; and the Backhouses and Peases of Darlington, and the Richardsons and others of Newcastle, contributed to the support of my family. I met with some of the best and most agreeable people I ever knew, among the Quakers. Many of them were remarkably liberal and enlightened in their views, not only on religion, but on many other subjects. I was astonished at the extent of their reading, and at the amount of knowledge they possessed. And they had a wonderful amount of charity towards other religious denominations. They believed the churches were doing much good, and rejoiced in their usefulness, though they could not always join them in their labors. I also found that in their dealings with each other, they were exceedingly conscientious. One Friend had recommended another, a lady, to invest her money in some mining speculation, which he believed was likely to prove profitable. She did so, and

Hosted by Google

lost her money, or received no interest from it. The Friend who had counselled the investment, took the shares, and returned the lady her money. This, I believe, was not a thing by itself, but a sample of Quaker dealings with each other. I learned some useful lessons from the Quakers, and I received from them many favors. I retain many pleasant recollections of my intercourse with them, and expect to think of them with pleasure to my dying day.

After I ceased to receive a salary for preaching, I and my family were often in straits, and at times we seemed on the very verge of starvation. My printing business did not pay its own expenses at first, and for several years after it began to yield a profit, the profit was required for new presses, new type, or had to lie dead in the shape of increased stock of publications. And I had no income from property. Yet in every case when we seemed to be reduced to extremities, supplies came from some quarter or other. Sometimes I knew the hand by which assistance was sent, but at other times my benefactors remained unknown. There was one good Christian, John Donaldson, who was always ready with his help. He not only aided me by many gifts, but busied himself to induce his friends to send me aid. He gave the first subscription towards a steam press; and when the press was bought, he sent a sum to purchase the first load of coals to get up the steam, to put the press in motion.

On one occasion, while I was lecturing in the South, nearly two hundred miles away from home, I failed to receive the supplies I expected from the agents for my publications, and my family seemed likely to be out of provisions before I could send them help. My wife and children had begun to feel uneasy and afraid. That day a man came up to the door with a cart-load of provisions. "Does Mr. Barker live here?" said the man to my eldest son, who had answered the knock at the door. "Yes," answered my son. "I have brought you some things," said the man, "some flour, and potatoes, and things." "They are not for us," said the poor little fellow, "my father is away." "But this is Mr. Barker's, is it not?" said the man. "Yes," said my son. "Then it is all right," said the man, "I was told to leave them here," and he began to unload. Both

Hosted by Google

children and mother were afraid there was some mistake, but the man went on unloading, and stocked the house with food for weeks to come.

A day or two before, my wife and children had been talking to each other, and expressing their apprehensions, as I had not been able to send them any money, that they would soon be without anything to eat. One of the children said, 'Let us pray, mother: perhaps God will send us something.' They all knelt down, and both mother and children prayed: and when they saw the abundant supplies with which the cart had stocked the house, they believed that God had sent them in answer to their prayers.

I refused to buy paper, or type, or anything, on credit, and I was often at a loss, when my stock of paper was almost out, to know where the money was to come from to get a fresh supply. And I had not so much faith as G. Müller of Bristol; at any rate, my faith did not give me the same pleasant assurances that I should receive what I desired, that Müller's faith gave him. I am inclined however to think that I had not so much trust in Providence, as I ought to have had. I certainly had not so much as I have now. But then, I am better off now than I was then. But I was lacking, to some extent, in Christian trust in God, as well as in resignation to His will, and hence my uneasiness. Many a time when I laid myself down on my bed at night, instead of going to sleep, I spent long hours in thought about my business, looking in every direction for a prospect of supplies to enable me to pay the wages of my men, and purchase paper. The first thing was to think of all the men that owed me money,—to consider which of all the number would be likely to send me remittances in time, and to reckon up the sums, to see if they would enable me to meet the demands upon me. The next thing was to do the same thing over again; and the next, to do it over again a third time. All this was accompanied with long and deep-drawn sighs, which were listened to by a fond and wakeful bedfellow, who silently sympathized with me in all my trials, and who was as restless and anxious as myself. Sometimes I moaned, and sometimes I prayed; and when I was wearied out with my fruitless labors, I fell asleep. It would have been better, if I could have done it,

Hosted by Google

to have "given to the winds my fears," and lost myself in peaceful and refreshing slumbers; for generally, on the following morning, the needful supplies arrived. They seldom came from the parties from whom I expected them, but they came notwithstanding.

One day, towards the close of the year, my stock of paper was very low, and I had nothing with which to purchase a fresh supply. Next morning a letter came, enclosing thirty-five pounds, a Christmas gift from friends in Ireland.

On one occasion, when I was unwell, a gentleman whom I had never seen, and whom I have not seen yet in fact, sent me forty pounds, to enable me to spend a month at some hydropathic establishment. He had read a number of my publications, and had been pleased with them, and having learned in some way that I was not well, had sent this proof of his kind regard.

There was one man in Newcastle, a wealthy man, who said to me, "Come to me whenever you are in difficulty, and you shall have whatever you need." I was often in difficulties, but hesitated to ask his help. One day, however, after having waited for supplies from other quarters as long as I durst, I went to him, and stated my case. He kept me waiting an hour or more, and then said, "No." I turned away ashamed and sad. A friend whom I encountered on my way home, said, "What is the matter with you? Are you ill? You look bad." I was obliged to tell him my story. "Is that all?" said he. "We can soon put that right." And he gave me, unasked, as much as I needed.

While we were struggling with our other difficulties, my wife was taken ill. The house in which we lived was badly drained, or rather, the drains being out of order, the offensive materials from other houses lodged under the floor of our cellar kitchen, and sent forth, through the floor, deadly effluvia. In this cellar kitchen we were obliged to live. I was so much from home, and when at home was so much in the open air, travelling to my appointments, and even when in the house, I spent so much of my time in an upper room writing, that I took no harm. It was otherwise with my poor wife. She had to be in this room almost all day long, and often till late at night. The result was a

Hosted by Google

deadly attack of fever. She had felt unwell for some days, but had still gone on with her work, and sought no medical advice or help. At length, as she was going to bed one night, she fainted on the stairs. The stairs were very steep, and the point at which she lost her consciousness was a most dangerous one, and it seemed a miracle that she had not fallen back to the bottom and been killed. But somehow she fell only a step or two. My eldest son heard there was something the matter, and ran to see what it was. There he found his poor, darling mother apparently dead, in the middle of the steep and winding staircase. How he did it, I do not know, nor does he, but though he was only a child of about thirteen years of age, he took his mother, and by some mysterious means, carried her up the remainder of the stairs, placed her on her bed, and then stood sorrowing and trembling till she came to herself. She was ill thirteen weeks. For two or three weeks she seemed on the point of death. On my return, late one night, from one of my engagements, ten miles away in the country, I found her strangely changed for the worse. She looked at me with a look I can never forget. She thought she was dying. I thought so too. Her eye said, Death; her whole expression said, Death. I burst into tears, and gave what I thought was my last fond embrace. She had power to utter just one sentence: it was an expression of tenderness and kindness, more kind and tender than I deserved; and then fell back on her pillow, as if giving up the ghost. But she lived through the night, and she lived through the following day, helpless and speechless, yet still breathing. She recovered, and remained with us to comfort and guide and bless us for nearly thirty years, and then, alas, all too soon apparently, for those who loved and all but adored her, she passed in peace to the worlds of light.

I believed myself all this time engaged in the service of my Maker, and I regarded the arrival of seasonable help from time to time, as a proof that I was an object of His tender care, and that my labors had His smile and blessing. Why did I not trust Him more fully?

By the time I had carried on my printing business for four or five years, the outlay for type, and presses, and other kinds of printing apparatus, became much less, while my

Hosted by Google

income from the sale of books became much greater, and I found myself able, at length, to purchase whatever I needed as soon as I wanted it. By-and-bye I had money always on hand. The relief I felt, when I found myself fairly above want and difficulty, was delightful beyond measure.

CHAPTER XIII.

CONTACT WITH UNITARIANS, AND DOWNWARD TENDENCY TO DEISM.

I had now for some time been gradually approaching the views of the more moderate class of Unitarians. Some of my friends, when they saw this, became alarmed, and returned to their old associates in the orthodox communities; others got out of patience with me for moving so slowly, and ran headlong into unbelief; while the great majority still chose to follow my guidance.

Two of my Quaker friends, who had aided me in my peace lectures, waited upon me and said, that it would be necessary for me, if I meant to continue to lecture in connection with the Peace Society, not to allow myself to be known as holding heterodox views. I answered that I would not submit to one hair's breadth of restraint, nor to a feather's weight of pressure; and the consequence was, the withdrawal of all assistance and countenance from the orthodox portion of the Quakers in every part of the country.

The Unitarians had long been observing our movements, and when they found us coming so near to their views, they began to attend our meetings, and to court our company. At first we were very uneasy at their advances, and shrank from them with real horror; but our dislike and dread of them gradually gave way. They were very kind. They lent us books, and assisted us with the loan of schools and chapels. They showed themselves gracious in many ways. And after the cruelty we had experienced from other parties, their kindness and sympathy proved very agreeable. I read their works with great eagerness, and was often de-

Hosted by Google

lighted to find in them so many sentiments so like my own. I had read some of Channing's works before, and now I read them all, and many of them with the greatest delight. I read the work of Worcester on the Atonement, of Norton on the Trinity, and of Ware on a variety of subjects. I also read several of the works of Carpenter, Belsham, Priestley, and Martineau. Some of those works I published. I also published a work by W. Penn, "The Sandy Foundation Shaken," which some thought Unitarian. I came at length to be regarded by the Unitarians as one of their party. They invited me to preach in their chapels, and aided me in the circulation of some of my publications. I preached for them in various parts of the country. I was invited to visit the Unitarians in London, and I preached in most of their chapels there, and was welcomed by many of the ministers and leading laymen of the Metropolis at a public meeting. When my friends raised a fund to purchase me a steam printing press, many Unitarians gave liberal subscriptions. Several of their leading men attended the meeting at which the press was presented, and took a leading part in the proceedings.

I had not mingled long with the Unitarians before I found that they differed from one another very much in their views. Some few were Arian, some were Socinian, and some quite Latitudinarian. Some admired Priestley, some Carpenter, some Channing, and some Parker. Some looked on Channing as an old fogy, and said there was not an advanced or progressive idea in his writings; while others thought that everything beyond Channing bordered on the regions of darkness and death. Some looked on the Scriptures as of divine authority, and declared their readiness to believe whatever they could be proved to teach: others regarded the Scriptures as of no authority whatever, and declared their determination to accept no views but such as could be proved to be true independent of the Bible. Some believed Jesus to be a supernatural person, commissioned by God to give a supernatural revelation of truth and duty, and empowered to prove the divinity of His mission and doctrine by supernatural works. Others looked on Christ as the natural result of the moral development of our race, like Bacon, Shakespeare, or Baxter. They looked on miracles as impossible, and regarded all the Bible ac-

Hosted by Google

counts of supernatural events as fables. They were Deists. One I found who declared his disbelief in a future life. There was a gradual incline from the almost Christian doctrine of Carpenter and Channing, down to the principles of Deism and Atheism.

While in London I became acquainted with Dr. Bowring, afterwards Sir John Bowring. He was one of my hearers at Stamford Street Chapel, and complimented me, after the sermon, by calling me the modern John Bunyan. He had been pleased with the simplicity of my style, and the familiar and striking character of my illustrations. He invited me to his house, showed me a multitude of curiosities, which he had collected in his travels round the world, made me a present of part of a skull which he had taken from an Egyptian Pyramid—the skull of a prince, who, he said, had lived in the days of Joseph,—he also made me a present of his works, including five volumes of translations from the Poets of Russia, Hungary, and other countries, and some works connected with his own eventful history. Dr. Bowring was a member of Parliament, and he took me to the House of Commons, introduced me to a number of the members, got me into the House of Lords, and did all in his power to make my stay in London as pleasant as possible.

Another London gentleman who was very kind was Dr. Bateman, the Queen's Assistant Solicitor of Excise. He took me to several assemblies, at one of which, besides a number of the great ones of the land, I was introduced to a New Zealand chief, a strong-built, broad-set, large-headed, lion-looking man. It was hinted that he knew the taste of human flesh, and was probably thinking at that moment, what rich contributions some of the youthful and well-fed parties who were paying their respects to him, would make to a New Zealand feast. At one of those assemblies there was a tremendous crowd, and I lost my hat, and some body else must have lost his, for I got a magnificent and strange-shaped head-cover, that might have distinguished, if not adorned, the greatest magnate of the land.

Dr. Bateman and Dr. Bowring showed me kindness in other ways, obtaining for me and my friends large grants of books, contributing to the fund for the purchase of a

Hosted by Google

steam press to be presented to me, and inducing a number of their friends to contribute. I was also introduced to Dr. Hutton, minister of Carter Lane Chapel, and preached and lectured in his pulpit. And I visited the meeting-place of the Free-thinking Christians, was introduced to the leading members of the society, and was presented with their publications. I preached at Hackney Chapel, where I had William and Mary Howitt as hearers, who were introduced to me after the sermon, invited me to spend some time at their house, showed me the greatest possible kindness, and did as much as good and kind people could do to make my stay in London a pleasure never to be forgotten.

A meeting was called in the Assembly room of the Crown and Anchor, or the city of London Tavern, to give me a public welcome to London, and a great number, the principal part, I suppose, of the London Unitarians met me there, to give me a demonstration of their respect and good wishes. I spoke, and my remarks were very favorably received; and so many and kind were the friends that gathered round me, and so strange and gratifying the position in which I found myself, that I seemed in another world. The contrast was so great between the treatment to which I had so long been accustomed in the New Connexion, and the long-continued and flattering ovation I was receiving from so large a multitude of the most highly cultivated people in the country, that if I had lost my senses amid the delightful excitement it could have been no matter for wonder.

But it was more than I was able to enjoy. I longed for quiet. I wanted to be at home with my wife and children, and in the society of my less distinguished, but older and more devoted friends. I fear I hardly showed myself thankful enough for the honor done me, or made the returns to my new friends to which they were entitled. They must have thought me rather cool in private; but they knew that I had been bred a Methodist, a plain Methodist, and had lived and moved among Methodists of the plainer kind, and never before been fairly outside the Methodist world. And some of them knew that I had not much time for pleasure-taking, sight-seeing, and the current kind of chat, or even the multiplication of new friends and acquaintances. They knew too that I had a business which required my at-

Hosted by Google

tention, and a vast quantity of letters to answer, and parties calling for my help in almost every part of the country.

I was happy at length to find myself at liberty to leave the metropolis, and my many new, agreeable and generous friends and acquaintances there, and return to quieter and calmer scenes, and more customary occupations, in the country.

But I never was permitted to confine myself within my old circle of acquaintances, and my old sphere of labor, after my visit to London. Accounts of my London meetings were given in the Unitarian newspapers and periodicals, and spread abroad through the whole country. The result was, I received invitations to preach and lecture from almost every town of importance throughout the kingdom, and from many places that were not of so much importance; and many of those invitations I was induced to accept. I visited Bristol, and had a welcome there as gratifying and almost as flattering as my London one. I was introduced to all the leading Unitarians there, and had a grand reception, and a course of lectures in the largest and most splendid hall in the city. And the place was crowded. I visited Bridgewater, Plymouth, Exeter, and Tavistock, with like results. And then I had calls to Yarmouth, Lynn, Bridport, Northampton, Taunton, Birmingham, Sheffield, Hull, Manchester, Liverpool, Bolton, Stockton, and other places without number. And everywhere I found myself in very agreeable society, and in every place I met with real, hearty, and generous friends. It is true I met with some who had little of religion but the name; but I met with others, and that in considerable numbers, who really feared and loved God, and who were heartily desirous to promote a living practical Christianity among their neighbors. These were delighted to see and hear a man who, while he held to a great extent their own religious views, was full of Methodistical zeal and energy, and who had power to attract, and interest, and move the masses of the people. They regarded me as an Apostle of their faith. They believed the millennium of enlightened and liberal Christianity was at hand. They hearkened to my counsels, and set to work to distribute tracts, to improve their schools, to establish new ones, to organize city missions, to employ

Hosted by Google

local preachers, and to circulate books of a popular and rousing character. And both they and I believed that a great and lasting revival of pure unadulterated religion was at hand. And it took some time to dissipate these pleasant hopes, and throw the well disposed and more pious part of the Unitarians down into the depths of despondency again. But the melancholy period arrived at length.

You cannot kindle a fire and keep it burning in the depths of the sea. And it is as hard to revive a dead or dying church, especially when its ministers and schools are supported by old endowments, and when many of its most influential members have caught the infection of infidelity, and become mere selfish, flesh-pleasing worldlings.

And this was the case with Unitarians. Many of the trustees, and a considerable portion of the wealthier members, cared nothing for religion. Others had no regard for anything about Christianity but the name and a little of the form. Some had such a hatred of what they called Methodist fanaticism, that they shrank from any manifestation of religious life or earnestness. And they had such a horror of cant, that they canted on the other side. Their talk about religion was little else but cant. Their talk about cant itself was cant. They had quite a dislike of any thing like religious zeal, and had a dread of any one who had been a Methodist, especially if he retained any of his Methodistical earnestness. The word unction was a term of reproach, and the rich, invaluable treasure for which it stood was an offence. They wished to enjoy themselves in a quiet, easy, self-indulgent, fashionable way, and have just so much of the form and appearance of religion as was requisite to a first class worldly reputation. They had no desire to be regarded as skeptics or unbelievers; that would have been as bad as to have been reputed Methodists; but they would have nothing to do with any schemes or efforts for the revival of religious feeling in their churches, or with any interference with the customary habits or quiet worldliness of their peaceable neighbors. Some, and in certain districts many, even of the poorer members, were utterly indifferent, and in some cases even opposed, to any religion. In some cases both rich and poor had become grossly immoral. Their churches had degenerated into eating and

Hosted by Google

drinking clubs. The endowments were spent in periodical feasts. There were also cases in which the chapel and school endowments had fallen into the hands of individuals or families, who looked on them and used them very much as private property. The schools and congregations had disappeared, and even the chapels and school-houses were rapidly hastening to ruin.

And there was everywhere a tendency downward from the Christian to the infidel level. If churches do not labor for the conversion of the world, and endeavor to become themselves more Christ-like and godly, degeneracy, and utter degradation and ruin are inevitable. And the tendency, at the time to which I refer, throughout the whole little world of Unitarianism was downwards to utter unbelief. In many minds there was as much impatience with old-fashioned moderate Unitarianism, as with old-fashioned Christianity or Methodism. They wanted preachers who would openly assail the doctrine of the divine or special inspiration of the Bible, and the supernatural origin of Christianity, and try to bring people down or up to the pagan or infidel level of mere sense and reason.

The Unitarians required no profession of faith; so that deists and atheists had the same title to membership as believers in Christ. They administered the Lord's Supper, but they had no church discipline, so that people defiled with the filthiest vices had the same right to communicate as people of the rarest virtues. Even the ministers were not required to make any profession of faith, so that deists and atheists were admitted, not only into the churches, but into the pulpits.

I was not aware of these things when I first became identified with the Body. It is possible that the Body was not so corrupt at that time as it was after. Any way, at the time of my return from infidelity to Christianity, both deists and atheists were among the ministers. If any find it hard to believe these things, let them read my pamphlet on Unitarianism, where they will find testimony from leading Unitarians themselves, to the truth of these statements.

Whatever encouragement therefore certain portions of the Unitarian Body might give to a man like me, the influence of the Body generally was sure to render my labor

Hosted by Google

of little or no avail. If the more religious portion of the ministers and members had been willing to come out from the Body, and leave their old-fashioned buildings and endowments behind them, they might have done some good; but this they were not prepared to do. Many even of the better class of Unitarian ministers were fond of a quiet literary life. They were students, scholars, and gentlemen, rather than preachers and apostles. They were too good to be where they were, and yet not robust, and daring, and energetic enough to make their way into more useful positions. And their style of preaching was not popular. It never would have moved the masses. Indeed much of it would have been unintelligible to the kind of people who crowded to my meetings. They could not therefore have moved into my sphere without exposing themselves to want. If some one could have gone and helped them in their own work, in their own spheres, it might have answered for them; but it would not have answered for them to come out and battle with the rude, coarse, outside world. And even if good, earnest ministers had gone to their aid, it would have caused a rupture and division in the church.

My labors therefore could do little more than rouse the better portion of the Body to a temporary zeal and activity, and transfer a number of my friends to their communion.

And I and my friends were out of our place, and out of our element, in their society. The earnest words we spoke were not 'like fire among dry stubble;' but like sparks falling into the water. Instead of us kindling them, they extinguished us. The 'strong man armed' who had got possession of the Unitarian House, was *too* strong to be overpowered and cast out by anything short of a miracle of Omnipotence. And that was out of the question. Christ can save individuals, but not churches. To members of a dead or depraved church his words are, 'Come out of her, my people.' And there was, and there is, no revival, no salvation, for Unitarians, but by their abandonment of the Unitarian fellowship, and their return to Christ as individuals. So you may guess what followed. I had got where it was impossible for me to do others much good, even if I had been better myself, and where it was impossible for me to prevent others from doing me most serious

Hosted by Google

harm. I was on an inclined plane, tending ever downward, with all surrounding influences calculated to render my descent every day more rapid.

Down this inclined plane I gradually slid, till I reached at length the land of doubt and unbelief. My descent was very slow. It took me several years to pass from the more moderate to the more extravagant forms of Unitarianism.

When I first read the works of Dr. Channing, though I was delighted beyond measure with many portions of his writings, I had a great dislike for some of his remarks about Christ and the Atonement. And when I first resolved to publish an edition of his works, I intended to add notes, with a view to neutralize the tendency of his objectionable views; but by the time I got his works into the press, those views appeared objectionable no longer.

I still however regarded portions of Theodore Parker's works with horror. His rejection of miracles, and of the supernatural origin of Christianity, seemed inexcusable. And many a time was I shocked while reading his "*Discourse on Matters pertaining to Religion*," by the contemptuous manner in which he spoke of portions of the sacred Scriptures. I was enchanted with many parts of the book; but how a man of so much learning, and with such amazing powers, and with so much love and admiration of Christ, and God, and goodness, could go to such extremes seemed a mystery. And I resolved, that if ever I published an edition of *his* works, I would add a refutation of his revolting extravagances. Yet time, and intercourse with the more advanced Unitarians, brought me, in a few years, to look on Parker as my model man.

When I first heard an Unitarian say, "Supernaturalism is superstition," I gave him to understand that I did not feel easy in his company. "You are right," said Dr. Bateman, "Pay no regard to such extreme views: preach your own old-fashioned practical doctrines." This made me feel more at ease. Yet the gentleman who spoke to me thus, as I afterwards found, was himself an anti-supernaturalist. But he saw that I had to be dealt with carefully,—that I was not to be hurried or argued, but led gently and unconsciously, into ultra views. This was the gentleman that busied himself more than any other in obtaining subscrip-

Hosted by Google

tions towards the steam press. He professed to like my supernatural beliefs much better than the anti-supernatural views of the extremer portion of his brethren. And perhaps he *did* like them better, though he had lost the power to believe them himself. But whether he liked them or not, he won my confidence, and gained an influence over me, which an honest avowal of his opinions, and especially an open attempt to induce me to accept them, would have rendered it impossible for him to gain.

Strange as it may seem, I still retained many of my old methodistical habits, and tastes, and sensibilities. My mind was still imbued to a considerable extent with true religious feeling. My head had changed faster than my heart. And I still took delight in reading a number of my old religious books. And I had no disposition to indulge myself in worldly amusements. I could not be induced to go to a theatre, or even to a concert. I would not play at draughts or chess. I hated cards. And all this time I held myself prepared to defend, in public discussion, what I considered to be the substance of Christianity. An arrangement was actually made for a public debate on Christianity about this time, between me and Mr. Holyoake. It was to take place at Halifax, and I attended at the time, and stated my views in two lectures; but Mr. Holyoake did not attend. He was prevented from doing so by illness, it was said.

Some of the publications which I issued about this time, in reply to one sent forth by the Rev. W. Cooke, led to a public discussion between me and that gentleman, in the Lecture-room, Newcastle-on-Tyne. Mr. Cooke was a minister—the ablest minister—in the Body to which I myself had formerly belonged. The list of subjects for debate included the following:—"What is a Christian? What is the Scripture doctrine with regard to the Atonement? What is Saving Faith? What do the Scriptures teach with regard to Original Sin, or Natural Depravity, The Trinity, The Divinity of Christ, The Hired Ministry, and Future Punishment?"

The discussion lasted ten nights, and every night the room was crowded to its utmost capacity. The excitement was intense. And it pervaded the whole country. There

Hosted by Google

were persons present from places nearly two hundred miles distant. Hugh Miller, the Scotch geologist, was there one night. As usual, both parties considered themselves victorious. And both were right. Neither the truth nor the error was all on one side; nor was the argument. Christianity was something different from the creed of either party, and something more and better. It was more and better than the creeds of both parties put together. My opponent, though something of a Christian, was more of a theologian. He was committed to a system, and could not see beyond it, or dared not accept any views at variance with its doctrines. Hence he went in direct opposition to the plainest teachings of the Scriptures, and the clearest dictates of common sense. He found it necessary also, to spend a portion of his time in foolish criticisms on Greek and Hebrew words, and in efforts to make the worse appear the better reason. As for myself, I was committed to change. I was travelling downwards at the time, at a rather rapid rate, and was not to be turned back, or even made to slacken my pace. The ordinary kind of theological vanities I regarded with the utmost contempt, and I had come to look on some portions even of Christ's own teachings as nothing more than doubtful human opinions. I held to the great foundation truths of religion, and to the general principles of Christian truth and duty, and, I will not say, defended them, for they needed no defence beyond their own manifest reasonableness and excellence,—but stated them both with sufficient clearness and fulness. But neither party was in a state of mind to learn from the other. War, whether it be a war of words, or a war of deadlier weapons, tends generally to widen the differences and increase the antipathies of the combatants. And so it was here. And one party certainly went further and travelled faster in the way of error after this exciting contest than he had done before.

And greater extremes produced more bitterness of feeling in my opponents. One man wished me dead, and said to a near relation of mine, "If there was a rope round his neck, and I had hold of it, I would hang him myself." And this was a man remarkable, in general, for his meekness and gentleness. Another said he "should like to *stick* me:" but *he* was a butcher. Another person, a woman,

Hosted by Google

said, "Hanging would be too good for him: hell is not bad enough for him." There was one even among my relations that would not speak to me; a relation that before had regarded me with pride. At some places where I was announced to lecture, men organized and plotted to do me bodily injury, and in some cases they threatened me with death. On more than one occasion I had narrow escapes with my life. Once I was struck on the head with a brick, which almost took away my consciousness, and came near putting an end to my life. On another occasion I was hunted by a furious mob for hours, and had repeated hair-breadth escapes from their violence. One man advocated my assassination in a newspaper, and the editor inserted the article, and quietly gave it his sanction.

All this was natural, but it was not Christian, nor was it wise. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Hard bricks have no tendency to soften a man's heart. These attempts to force me into submission made me more rebellious. They roused my indignation to the highest pitch, and fearfully increased my hatred of the churches and their creeds, and made me feel as if I ought to wage against my persecutors an unsparing and eternal war.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIBLE QUESTION. INSPIRATION, INFALLIBILITY. HISTORY OF MY VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT.

A PRAYER.

Help me, O Thou Great Good Father of my spirit, in the work on which I am now about to enter. Enable me, on the great and solemn subject on which I am now to speak, to separate the true from the false, the doubtful from the certain, the important from the unimportant. And may I be enabled to make all plain. And save me, O my Father, from going too far. Let me not run to any extreme. Yet enable me to go far enough. May I not, through needless fear, or through any evil motive, be kept from speaking anything that ought to be said. I am Thine,

Hosted by Google

O my God; use me according to Thy will, for the service of Thy Church, and for the welfare of the world. I am every moment accountable to Thee; help me so to speak that I may be at peace with my own soul, and have a sweet assurance of Thy approbation. Fill my soul, O my Father, with the spirit of love, of truth, of tenderness, and of all goodness. Guide Thou my pen, and control my spirit. Grant that I may so write, that I may do some good and no harm. May Thy people endeavor to do justice to what I say. If any one, through error or evil disposition, should do me wrong, help me to bear the trial with Christian meekness and patience. And may the time at length come, when the religion of Christ, so full of truth and love, shall be understood and embraced by all mankind, and when by its blessed and transforming power the earth shall become the abode of purity, and love, and bliss. AMEN.

It may not be amiss to state now, how far I had gone at this time, with regard to my views on the Bible.

1. I remember a time, when I believed that the Bible in which my father read, came down direct from God out of heaven, just as it was. I looked on it as simply and purely divine.

2. I afterwards learnt that the Bible was printed on earth, and that it was a translation from other books which had been written in Greek and Hebrew.

3. But I still supposed that the Greek and Hebrew Bible was wholly divine, and that the translation was as perfect as the original.

4. I next learned that the translation was *not* perfect,—that the translators were sometimes in doubt as to the meaning of the original, and put one meaning in the body of the page, and another in the margin,—that in other cases they had misunderstood the original, and given erroneous translations. I sometimes heard preachers correcting the translation of passages, and when I came to read commentaries and other theological works, I found the authors doing the same thing.

5. I then found that there were several translations of the Scriptures, one by Wesley, one by Campbell, and others by

Hosted by Google

other men, and that they all differed from each other, and that none of them could be regarded as wholly correct. When I read the Notes of Adam Clarke on the Bible, I found that he often differed from all the translators, and that in some cases he differed from them very widely.

6. I still supposed that the originals were perfect; that in them we had the words of God just as they came from His own mind.

7. But I afterwards found that there were several originals, —or at least several Greek and Hebrew Bibles,—and that they also differed from each other to some extent, and that none of them could be said to be entirely free from error.

8. I learnt from Adam Clarke and others that the printed Greek and Hebrew Bibles had been compiled from *manuscripts*,—or from Bibles, or portions of the Bible, written by the hand, before the art of printing was known.

9. I also found that those manuscripts differed from each other, in a great many places, and that in some cases they differed on points supposed to be of considerable importance, and that it was impossible to tell which of the manuscripts were most correct.

10. I also learnt, that all existing manuscripts were copies of other manuscripts, and that the real original books, the books written by Moses and the Prophets, and by the Evangelists and Apostles, were all lost, so that it was impossible to tell, with absolute certainty, whether any of the manuscripts were absolutely correct,—that when the best and ablest men on earth had done their utmost, there would still be room for doubt as to the true reading, as well as to the correct meaning, of various portions of Scripture.

11. I next learned that there were differences of opinion among critics and divines as to whether certain books ought to have a place in the Bible or not. In my father's Bible there were several books called the Apocrypha. Some of these were very interesting. I used to read them with a great deal of pleasure. And large portions of others, especially those called *The Wisdom of Solomon*, and *Ecclesiasticus*, seemed as good, as true, and as beautiful as anything in the Book of Proverbs. My parents however told me, that those books were not to be put on a level

Hosted by Google

with the other books of the Bible,—that there was some mystery about their origin, and that there was some doubt whether they were really a part of the word of God.

12. I afterwards learnt though, that they were regarded as part of God's word by the Catholics, and I continued to read large portions of them with much satisfaction and profit.

13. I also learnt from Adam Clarke and others, that there had been doubts in the minds of some of the ancient Christians with regard to the right of some of the Epistles and of the Book of Revelation to be admitted as parts of the Bible. And I afterwards found that the Book of Revelation was excluded from the Bible by the Greek Church, and by Luther as well:—and that Luther had but little regard for the Epistle of James, one of the finest portions of the whole Bible as I thought.

14. I further learnt that some had doubts as to the right of Solomon's Song to a place in the Bible, and I found that even Adam Clarke did not believe that it had any spiritual meaning.

All these were facts; and I learned them all from Christian authors of the highest repute for learning and piety. And so long as things went on smoothly, they had not, so far as I can remember, any injurious effect on my mind. But when, after having been harassed for years by the intolerance of my brethren, I was expelled from the ministry and the church, and finally placed in a hostile position with regard to the great body of Christians and Christian ministers, I began to see, that those facts were incompatible with the views and theories of the divine inspiration and absolute perfection of the Bible held by my opponents. I came very slowly to see this, and after I saw it I was slow to speak on the subject in my publications; but the time to see and to speak arrived at length.

One of my New Connection opponents, by repeated charges of infidelity, and by statements about the Scriptures which I knew he could not maintain, got me into controversy on the subject. Then I uttered all that was in my mind. I showed that many of the things which he had said about the Bible were not true,—that they were inconsistent with plain unquestionable facts,—with facts acknow-

Hosted by Google

ledged by all the divines on earth of any consequence, and known even to himself and his brethren.

While engaged in this controversy I made discoveries of other facts inconsistent with the views of my persecutors, and pressed them upon my opponent without mercy. And the violent and resentful feeling excited by his unfairness, dishonesty and malignity in defending the Bible, led me probably to be less concerned for its claims than I otherwise should have been. Suffice it to say, I came out of the debate with my savage opponent, not a disbeliever in the Bible or Christianity, but with views farther removed from those which he contended for, and with feelings much less hostile to heterodox extremes perhaps than those with which I entered it.

Among the views I was led to entertain and promulgate with regard to the Bible about this time, were the following.

1. We have no proof that the different portions of the Bible were absolutely perfect as they came from the hands of the writers. The probability is on the other side. For if an absolutely perfect book had been necessary for man, it would have been as necessary to *keep* it perfect, as to *make* it perfect. And as God has not seen fit to *keep* it perfect, we have no reason to suppose that He made it so.

2. But in truth, to write an absolutely perfect book in an imperfect language, is impossible. And all human languages are imperfect. The Hebrew language, in which the greater part of the Bible was written, is very imperfect. And it seems to have been much more imperfect in those times when the Bible was written, than it is now. And the Greek language, in which the remainder of the Bible was written, was imperfect. And the Greek used in the New Testament is not the best Greek;—it is not the Greek of the Classics.

3. And both Greek and Hebrew now are *dead* languages, and have been so for many ages. This renders them more imperfect in some respects: it makes it harder in many cases to ascertain the sense in which words, and particular forms of expression, are used by the writers. With regard to the Hebrew, we have no other books in that language, written in those early ages when the different parts of the

Hosted by Google

Bible were written, to assist us in ascertaining the sense in which words were used.

4. The writers of Scripture differ very much from one another both in style and matter, and their works differ greatly in worth and usefulness. Ezekiel is much more obscure than Jeremiah; and Jeremiah is less plain than Isaiah. Many of the figures, and some of the visions of Ezekiel, seem coarse, and some of them appear unintelligible. And the matter of many parts of Ezekiel's prophecies seems inferior to that of the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah. Some portions of Ezekiel are very valuable; they are good and useful to the last degree. But other portions, whatever value they might have for persons of former times and other lands, have none, that I can see, for us.

5. Some portions of Jeremiah, and even of Isaiah, appear to have little that is calculated to be of use in the present day. Indeed some portions seem unintelligible. But many portions of the writings of both those prophets abound in the most touching, startling, and useful lessons.

6. And so with Daniel and the minor prophets. The darkness and the light, and things more useful and things less useful, are mingled in them all.

7. It is the same with the New Testament. Some portions of Paul's writings are as plain as they well can be; others are very obscure, perhaps quite unintelligible. Some passages in the controversial portions of his Epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, and considerable parts of the Epistle to the Hebrews, are dark as night to many; and I fear that those who think they understand them, are under a delusion. And as portions of these Epistles were wrested by the unlearned and unconfirmed in Peter's time, so have they been mistaken for lessons in moral laxity since. And still they are used by many as props for immoral and blasphemous doctrines.

8. And what shall we say of the Book of Revelation? Adam Clarke thought he understood it as well as any one, yet acknowledged that he did not understand it at all. And though there are several passages that are both plain and practical, and many that are most wondrously and sublimely poetical, and some few that are rich both in truth and tenderness, yet, as a whole, the Book is exceedingly, if not impenetrably, dark.

Hosted by Google

9. Some portions of the Old Testament history are given twice over, as in the Books of Kings and Chronicles, and the two accounts, in some cases, seem to be irreconcilable with each other. The numbers often differ, and some of them seem altogether too large. The accounts agree well enough, and the statements are credible enough, as a rule, on matters of great importance; but on smaller matters there are many plain discrepancies.

Some other portions of the Bible, including two or three of the Psalms, are given twice over.

10. Then who that reads the Proverbs attentively can help seeing, that some of them are much plainer, and calculated to be much more useful, than others. Many of them are rich in wisdom and goodness beyond measure; but others appear to have neither much of beauty, nor much of utility.

11. And the Psalms are not all of equal excellence. Some contain terrible outpourings of hatred and vengeance. Many contain fierce and resentful expressions. And though these things were excusable in early times, and were, in fact, not wicked, but only a lower form of virtue, we cannot but feel their great inferiority to the teachings and spirit of Jesus. But taken as a whole, the Psalms are miracles of beauty and sublimity, of tenderness and majesty, of purity and piety, of wisdom and righteousness. They are a heaven of bright constellations; a world of glory and blessedness.

12. The Book of Job too is a mixture, and to some extent a mystery, but it would be a great loss to the world if it were to perish. The twenty-ninth and thirty-first chapters are worth the whole literature of infidel philosophy a hundred times over. And many other portions of the book are 'gems of purest ray serene,' and treasures of incalculable value.

13. And even the Book of Ecclesiastes, while it contains many things of a strange, a dark, and a doubtful character, has many oracles of wisdom and piety. It contains lessons of wonderful beauty, and of great solemnity and power.

14. There is a vast amount of wisdom and goodness in the laws of Moses. I say nothing of the laws that are merely

Hosted by Google

ceremonial: but there are lessons of great importance mixed up even with them at times. Take those about the Nazarites. Most of them are beautiful, excellent; and well would it be if people even in our days would accept them as rules for their own conduct.

Then take the laws which forbid the use of wine and strong drink to the ministering priests. They are wonderfully wise.

And even the laws about the different kinds of beasts, and birds, and fishes, that were allowed or forbidden as food, are, on the whole, remarkably philosophical. Considering the time when they were given, and the people for whom they were intended, and the ends for which they were designed, the laws of Moses generally, are worthy of the highest praise.

15. But Judaism is not Christianity. That which was the best for the Jews three thousand years ago, was not the best for all mankind through all the ages of time. Compared with the religions and laws of surrounding nations, and of preceding ages, Judaism was glorious,—but compared with Christianity it is no longer glorious. Judaism compared with Paganism, was a wonder of wisdom, philosophy, and righteousness; but compared with Christianity it is a mass of rudiments, first lessons, beggarly elements.

Hence several things contained in the law of Moses are repealed or forbidden by Christ; still more are quietly dropped and left behind; while other portions are developed, expanded, and exalted.

All these things, and a multitude of other things, have to be taken into account, if we would form a correct and proper estimate of the Bible. All these, and quite a multitude of other matters, should be borne in mind when we are considering in what terms to speak of the Book, and in what way to qualify our commendations of its contents. I do not believe it possible to praise the Bible too highly; but nothing is easier than to praise it unwisely, untruly. You cannot love or prize the Bible too much; but you may err as to what constitutes its worth. You cannot over-estimate its beneficent power; but you may make mistakes as to the parts or properties of the book in which its strength lies. A child can hardly value gold or silver too highly,

Hosted by Google

but he makes a great mistake when he fancies their great excellency to consist in the brightness of their colors. And so with regard to the Bible. Its best friends and its ablest eulogists can never think or speak of it beyond its real worth; but they may fancy its worth to consist in qualities of secondary importance, or in a kind or form of perfection which it does not possess.

The enemies of the Bible often speak evil of it ignorantly, from the mere force of bad example, as parrots curse: and the friends of the Bible often speak well of it ignorantly, as parrots pray. They know, they feel, they are sure, that the Bible is good,—that it does them good,—that it purifies their souls,—that it improves their characters,—that it makes them cheerful, joyful, useful, happy. Yet all the time they fancy, because they have been erroneously taught, that the blessed volume owes its comforting, transforming, and glorious power to some metaphysical nicety, or to some unreal or impossible kind of perfection.

When Christians attribute the sanctifying, elevating, comforting power of the Bible to the fact that it is divinely inspired, they are right. But many do not stop there. They suppose that divine inspiration has given the Book certain grammatical, rhetorical, logical, historical, scientific and metaphysical qualities which it has *not* given it, and they even attribute its superior worth and saving power to those imaginary qualities.

It was against the mistakes and mis-statements of my opponents that I first wrote, and it was their ignorance, or their want of honesty and candor, that gave me at times the advantage over them in our debates on the subject. It was for want of seeing things in their proper light, and putting them in their proper shape before their hearers and readers, that made their efforts to keep people from doubt and unbelief unavailing. They, in truth, made unbelief or infidelity to consist in something in which it did not consist, and made people think they were infidels when they were no such thing. If they had given up all that was erroneous with regard to the Bible, and undertaken the defence of nothing but what was true, they might both have convinced the honest skeptic, and strengthened the faith of Christians. But they undertook to defend the false, and

Hosted by Google

to assail the true, and the consequence was, they were beaten, and the cause which they sought to serve was injured.

John Wesley says, that the way to drive the doctrine of Christian perfection, or 'true holiness,' out of the world, is to place it too high,—to make it consist in something that is beyond man's power. And the way to drive the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures out of the world, is to give the doctrine a form which the Scriptures themselves do not give it,—to change it from a truth into an error,—to teach that divine inspiration produces effects which it does not produce,—that it imparts qualities which it does not impart, and which the Scriptures themselves do not exhibit.

And this is what many defenders of the Bible do. And this is one great cause both of the increase of infidelity, and of the confidence of its disciples.

It is impossible to prove the doctrine of the divine inspiration of the Bible, as that doctrine is defined by many religious writers. It is not true. And those who attempt to prove that the Bible is such a book, as these false theological theories of divine inspiration would require it to be, must always be beaten, in a fair fight, with an able and well-informed infidel opponent. The man who contends that the Bible is all that certain old theories of inspiration require it to be, fights against plain facts, and even his friends will often see and feel that he has not succeeded. He may say a many fine things, a many good things, a many great things, a many glorious things about the Bible, and they may all be true: and he may say a many bad things, a many horrible things against infidelity, and they too may be true. And his friends may see and feel that, on the whole, he is substantially right, and that the infidel is essentially wrong. They may see and feel that on the Christian side is all that is good, and true, and holy; and that on the infidel side is a world of darkness and depravity, of horror and despair. Still, on the one definite point, 'Is the Bible divinely inspired according to the theory of divine inspiration laid down by certain theologians,' the Christian will be beaten out and out,—he will not only be confuted, but confounded, dishonored, and utterly routed. The Bible and Christianity will receive an

Hosted by Google

undeserved wound, and infidelity will have an undeserved triumph; and many a poor young man whose leanings were towards the Bible, and who would have liked its advocate to triumph, will be disheartened, distressed, embarrassed, distracted, and perhaps undone.

The true doctrine of Scripture inspiration, or of Scripture authority, is about as applicable to the common version, and to honest Christian translations generally, and to all the manuscripts, and to all the printed Greek and Hebrew Bibles, as it would be to the lost originals if they could be recovered. There is divine inspiration enough in the poorest translation of the Scriptures, and in the most imperfect Greek and Hebrew transcript of them ever made, to place the Bible above all the books on earth, as a means of enlightening, regenerating, comforting, and saving mankind. But in none of its forms is the Bible *so* inspired, as to make it what the unauthorized, fanciful, impossible theories of certain dreamy, or proud, presumptuous, and overbearing theologians require it to be.

I have seen twenty or thirty definitions of Scripture INSPIRATION all of which betray the Bible into the hands of its adversaries. And it is no use expecting to convert skeptics, till these definitions are set aside, and better, truer ones put in their place. We ourselves pay no regard to these definitions. They are merely human fictions. They have no warrant from Scripture, and we cannot allow ourselves to be hampered with them.

The passage in the New Testament which speaks of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament as divinely inspired, gives us no definition of divine inspiration. It says, 'All Scripture given by inspiration of God is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, tending to make the man of God perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works:' but it goes no further. It does not say that all Scripture given by inspiration of God will be written in a superhuman language, or in a superhuman style. Nor does it say that all its allusions to natural things will be perfectly correct; that all the stories which it tells will be told in a superhuman way. Nor does it say that all the precepts, and all the institutions, and all the revelations, and all the examples of the Book

Hosted by Google

will be up to the level of absolute perfection. What the passage *does* say of such Scriptures as are given by inspiration of God, is true of the Old Testament writings as a whole, and still truer of the New Testament writings: they *are* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; and they are adapted to make men perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. All this you can prove. But you cannot prove that they answer to the definitions of divine inspiration so often given in books of theology.

There is another passage in the New Testament which says that 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.' This too is true of the Old Testament writings as a whole; but it gives no countenance to the definitions of Scripture inspiration given by dreamy theologians.

Peter says that 'holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit;' but he does not say that everything spoken or written by holy men, when moved by the Holy Spirit, would answer to some human dream of absolute perfection. He does not say that the holy men, when moved to speak by the Holy Spirit, would cease to be men, or even be free from all the imperfections or misconceptions of their age and nation, and speak as if they had become at once perfect in the knowledge of natural philosophy, or of common history, or even on every point pertaining to religion. They might speak as moved by the Holy Spirit, and yet utter divine oracles in an imperfect human language, and in a defective human style, and even use illustrations based on erroneous conceptions of natural facts and historical events.

A man moved to speak by the Holy Spirit would not exhort people to be idle or heedless; he would urge them to be industrious and prudent: but in enforcing his exhortation to those virtues by a reference to the ANT, he might give proof that his knowledge of the ANT was not perfect,—that his ideas of its ways were not in every little point correct.

A man full of the Holy Spirit, and especially a man who had received of its influences without measure, would

Hosted by Google

be sure to exhort men to be very wise and very harmless; but he might use a form of words in his exhortation which had originated in the misconception that serpents were wiser than any other animals, and that doves were more harmless than any other birds. Yet the exhortation would be good in substance; and even the form, being in accordance with the views prevailing in his times, would be unobjectionable; and both would be consistent with the fullest inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

A great, good man, speaking under divine impulse, urging his son in the Gospel to resist false and immoral teachers, might say, 'Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth; but their folly shall be made manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.' Whether the men who withstood Moses were really called Jannes and Jambres or not, I do not know. The Old Testament does not say they were. The probability is, that Paul rested his illustration on a Jewish tradition. But as the tradition was received as true by his people, his lesson was just as good as if it had rested on some unquestionable fact stated in authentic history.

And so with regard to illustrations and incidental statements and allusions generally. Though they may rest on misconceptions, the moral lessons and spiritual revelations into the service of which they are pressed, may be God's own oracles, and the book in which they appear may, as a whole, be given by divine inspiration, and be profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, and conducive to all the great and desirable ends so dear to God.

There is no such thing as absolute perfection with regard to books. There is no authorized standard, no test, no measure of absolute perfection for books; and if there were, no man could apply it. Of a thousand different books each may be perfect in its way, yet none of them be absolutely perfect. Each may have some great good end in view, and be adapted to answer that end; and that is the only perfection of which a book admits. And it is perfection enough.

And this perfection the Bible has. It has the best, the highest, the most glorious objects in view, and it is adapted

Hosted by Google

to accomplish those objects; and that is sufficient. They that undertake to prove that it has any other perfection, will fail, and both bring discredit on themselves, and suspicion on the Bible. The Bible may be more grievously wronged by unwise praise, than by unjust censure.

Absolutely perfect books and teachers are not necessary to our instruction and welfare. We can learn all we need to know, and all we need to do, from books and teachers that are *not* perfect. We have no absolutely perfect books on Grammar, Rhetoric, or Logic. Yet men learn those sciences readily enough when they study them heartily and diligently. We have no perfect systems of Arithmetic, Geometry, or Algebra; of Geography, Astronomy, or Geology; of Anatomy, Physiology, or Chemistry; of Botany, Natural History, or Physical Geography. Yet on all those subjects men gather an immense amount of knowledge, make a multitude of new discoveries, and arrive at a wonderful degree of certainty.

And so with arts and trades. We have no absolutely perfect teachers or books in music, or painting, or sculpture; in farming, or manufactures, or trade. Yet what wonderful proficients men become in those arts! We have no perfect teachers of languages: yet any man with a taste for the study of them, may learn twenty or thirty of them in a life-time. Even indifferent books and teachers will enable a man who is bent on learning, to master the most difficult language on earth.

A man once asked me, 'Which is the best English Grammar?' My answer was, 'The first you come at. A poor one to-day is better than a good one to-morrow. Begin your studies at once with the grammar you have; and you will soon find out which is the best.' And so I say with regard to books on other subjects. Make the best use you can of the books you have, and you will soon come across better. And when you do come across them, you will be all the better prepared to profit by them, than if you were to waste your time in idleness till you can get hold of the best of all. Besides; the book that is best for others, may not be the best for you.

And if a man should ask me, 'Which is the best translation of the Bible?' I would say, 'The first you come

Hosted by Google

at. Read any, till you meet with others. Then read many, and, using your common sense, judge for yourself which is best. That which does most to make you a good, a strong, a useful and a happy man is the best.

Some want books and teachers that will save them the trouble of study. And there are none such. It would be a pity if there were. They would do no good, but harm. Nothing strengthens and develops the mind like labor. But if you had the best books possible they would not enable you to acquire much useful knowledge, without close study, and vigorous mental effort.

I learned Greek with the worst Greek Grammar I ever saw; but when I had learned the language tolerably, I found one of the best Greek Grammars in the world, and went rapidly through it, and found that it had little to add to the information I had gained already from the poorer one.

And it is the same with regard to books on God, religion and duty. Books with numbers of defects,—with defects of style, defects of arrangement, and even defects in matter, may teach you many useful lessons, if you read and study them properly; and the best books on earth will not teach you much if you read them carelessly.

A great deal, almost every thing, depends on the spirit or the object with which a man reads a good book. You may read the best books to little profit, and you may get great good from very inferior ones.

The Bible is the best religious and moral book on earth; it is, in its most imperfect translations, able to make men wise, and good, and useful, and happy to the last degree, if they will read and study it properly. But there is not a better book on earth for making a man a fool, if he comes to it with a vain mind, a proud spirit, a fulness of self-conceit, or a wish to be a prophet. A desire to be a prater about the millennium, the second coming of Christ, the personal reign, the orders of angels, the ranks of devils, the secrets of God's counsels, the hidden meaning of the badgers' skins, the shittim wood, the Urim and Thummim, the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Teraphim and Anakim, and all the imaginary meanings of imaginary types, and the place where Paradise was situated, and the mountain peak on which the Ark rested, and

Hosted by Google

Behemoth, and Leviathan, and the spot at which the Israelites entered the Red Sea, and the compass of Adam's knowledge before he named the animals, and the fiery sword at the gate of Paradise, and the controversial parts of Paul's epistles, and the mysteries of the Book of Revelation, and the spiritual meaning of Solomon's Song, and the place where Satan had his meeting with the sons of God in the days of Job, and the exact way in which Job used the potsherd, when he scraped himself as he sat among the ashes, &c., &c.,—I say if this is what a man desires, the Bible will help him to his wish, and make him the laughing-stock, or the pity of all sensible men.

And if he employs the one hundred and fifty rules of Hartwell Horne for misinterpreting the plain portions of the Bible, and his one hundred and forty other rules for darkening his mind, and confounding his soul, the Bible will ruin him still quicker. A better book for trying a man, and for rewarding his honesty, and piety, and charity, if he has those virtues, and for making them ever more; or for punishing a man's vanity, and pride, and selfishness, and perversity, if he be the slave of such passions, God could hardly have given. And to try and to bless men are the two great objects of all God's revelations.

My opponent was fond of saying that the Bible was an infallible guide. The statement was not true in any strict and rigorous sense of the words. And it was foolish for him to make it in an eager debate, for he could never prove it. And he was not long in finding this out. A few plain questions set him quite fast. The Bible is an infallible guide, you say. We ask, Which Bible? The common version? No. John Wesley's version? No. Dr. Conquest's? No. The Unitarian version? No. *Any* version? No. Is it some particular Greek or Hebrew Bible then? No. Is it the manuscripts? No. But these are all the Bibles we have.

The Bible is an infallible guide, you say. What to? Uniformity of opinion? No. Uniformity of worship? No. Uniformity of life? No. Uniformity of feeling, of affection, of effort? No. It does not even require uniformity in those matters. It supposes diversity. It asks only for sincerity, honesty, fidelity. But it is an infalli-

Hosted by Google

ble guide to all truth and duty, you say. Has it guided you to all truth and duty? No. Whom *has* it guided to those blessed results? You cannot say.

But it is an infallible guide to all that truth which is necessary to a man's salvation, you say. But there is no particular amount of truth that *is* necessary to a man's salvation. The amount of truth necessary to a man's salvation differs according to his powers and privileges. That which is necessary to my salvation may not be necessary to the salvation of a Pagan. It is sincerity in the search of truth, and fidelity in reducing it to practice, which is necessary to a man's salvation, and not the acquisition of some particular quantity of truth.

The Bible is an infallible guide. To whom? To the Catholics? No. To the Unitarians? No. To the Quakers? No. To the Church of England people? No. To Methodists and Calvinists? No.

That the Bible is a trusty guide enough, I have no doubt, if we will faithfully and prayerfully follow it; but to talk as if it would guide every one infallibly to exactly the same views, or to the fulness of all truth, is not wise. It is not warranted either by the Bible itself, or by facts.

Besides, if a book is to guide a man infallibly, it must be made perfectly plain; it must be infallibly interpreted. And where are the infallible interpreters? We know of none that even profess to be such outside the Church of Rome; and none but themselves and their own Church members believe their professions. *You* do not believe them. As a rule, the claim of infallibility is taken as a proof that the man who makes it is not only fallible, but something worse.

But if we had infallible interpreters, they would not be able to keep us from error, unless we had infallible hearts and infallible understandings. And we have no such things. If we had, we should neither need infallible books nor infallible interpreters.

That the Bible is all that it *needs* to be, and all that it *ought* to be, I am satisfied; but that it is all that some of its zealous advocates *say* it is, plain and unquestionable facts make it impossible for any candid, unbiassed, and well-informed man to believe.

Hosted by Google

We have all an infallible guide within us, if we be true Christians. For the Spirit of God dwells in the hearts of all true disciples of Christ. But the infallible guide does not make us all infallible followers. The infallible teacher does not make us all infallible learners. We are blessed with divine inspiration, but we are not converted into machines. Inspiration does not make us absolutely perfect either in knowledge or virtue, still less does it make us perfect all at once. We shall learn enough, and we shall learn fast enough, if we are faithful; but we shall never be perfect or infallible in our knowledge in this world.

As the subject of Bible inspiration is one of great importance, and as it is at present exciting the greatest interest, it may not be amiss here to give a few quotations from writers who have been led to see the doctrine in the same light as ourselves. I am unable to give the names of some of the authors from whose works I quote, but they are all connected with one or other of the great evangelical denominations of the day.

The following is from "BASES OF BELIEF," by Edward Miall, one of the best books on the truth and divinity of Christianity I have had the happiness to read. Mr. Miall is a Congregational minister, editor of the Nonconformist Newspaper, and Member of Parliament. As his remarks are lengthy, we are obliged to abridge them in some cases.

'It is not needed, in order to show satisfactorily that there is a divine revelation *in* the record, to prove that the record is *itself* divine. To disprove that revelation, a man must do something more than point out marks of imperfection in the Book containing it, such marks as would not be expected in a book written directly by the hand of God. If it could be demonstrated that the penmen who have given us the life of Christ, were indebted to no other aid than that supplied by the good mental and moral qualifications which any others might possess, the main strength of Christianity as a communication of God's mind and will, would remain untouched.

'The discrepancies between the statements of the four Evangelists,—the indications of individual or national pecu-

Hosted by Google

liarities,—the modes of describing occurrences, true because well understood in the locality of the speaker, but not strictly true in other places,—all matters which serve to show that the same objects have been seen by different persons, but from different points of view, are to be allowed for as reconcilable with a truthfulness that may be implicitly relied upon. One informant may have blundered in geography, another may have been mistaken in an historical reference, a third may have misquoted or misapplied some prophetical allusion, and all may have given ample proof that they were not free from the influence of the traditions generally received in the places to which they belonged; but unless these peculiarities and infirmities show a want of competency as witnesses, or a lack of integrity, they may be dismissed, as having no bearing on the main point.

'The question whether the Gospel records are free from blemishes found to attach to every other record, has nothing to do with the main issue. Our *theories* may require them to be free from such harmless imperfections; but our *reason* makes no such demand.

'The memoir of a great man does not lose its use and virtue, because written by a biographer open to some censure: nor can the life of Christ fail of its transcendant purpose, because the writers were not in all things infallible.

'Appearances of harmless human imperfections in the writers do not invalidate the sacred records. For instance, if it should be found that those faithful witnesses have given their testimony in exceptionable Greek,—or that in some matters, not touching their main object, they are not enlightened above the common standard of their times and station,—or that they have habits of thought, or speech, or action, which, though perfectly innocent in themselves, show that they are not so far advanced in science as some,—if, in a word, it should appear that the historic writers of the New Testament were really men of the age in which they lived, and men of the country in which they were born and educated, subject to the then limitations of general knowledge,—men of individual tendencies, tastes, temperaments, passions, and even prejudices,—wherein is the world worse for this, and in what respect could our reason have

Hosted by Google

wished it otherwise? We protest, we do not see. On the contrary, we feel it to be an advantage, that the divine light emanating from the life of Jesus Christ, should reach us through an artless and thoroughly human medium. It is no misfortune, in our judgment, but quite the opposite, that 'we have this treasure in earthen vessels.' Such traces on the pages of evangelic history as mark the writers for men,—honest, faithful, competent, but yet verily and indeed men,—bring their narrative much more closely home to our sympathies, and set us upon a more ardent search for the spirit in its several portions, than if the story had been written by the faultless pen of some superior being.'

Mr. Miall then refers to the errors and discrepancies in the genealogies prefixed to two of the lives of Christ, and says, 'They are accounted for, in our view, by the humanity of the writers. We are not bound to regard the genealogies as infallibly accurate, any more than we are bound to regard the dialect of the writers as pure Greek. No essential truth is affected by either, and that is enough.'

Mr. Miall further argues that intellectual infallibility was not necessary, and was not to be looked for, in Paul, the great expounder of the Gospel. And he adds, 'Taking the New Testament as a whole, we are not disposed to deny, that it bears upon the face of it, many indications that its several writers were not entirely exempt from mental imperfection,—but we contend that the mental imperfection which their works exhibit, is perfectly compatible with the communication to men of infallible knowledge respecting God, His moral relations to us, His purposes with regard to us, and the religious duties which these things enforce on all who would attain eternal life. And if this be true, the record satisfies the spiritual need of man in its fullest extent.'

We have given Mr. Miall's views at greater length, because he occupies so high a position, not only in one of the largest religious denominations in England, but in the country generally, and because we have never seen any protest against his views from any writer of influence, in any branch of the Church of Christ. Such protests may have appeared, but we have never met with any. We may add, that while Mr. Miall gives up the idea of infallibility, he

Hosted by Google

holds that the writers of the New Testament history were under divine *guidance* in composing their several memoirs of Christ.

Mr. Miall's views on the Old Testament writings we may have occasion to notice further on.

The Rev. Dr. Parker, author of ECCE DEUS, has some remarks of a character somewhat similar to those of Mr. Miall, but we have not his works at hand.

Our next quotation is from a lecture on SCIENCE AND REVELATION, by the very reverend R. Payne Smith, D. D., Dean of Canterbury. The lecture was delivered at the request of the Christian Evidence Society, London, and is published by that society, in their volume, entitled MODERN SKEPTICISM.

'Revelation has nothing to do with our physical state. Reason is quite sufficient to teach us all those sanitary laws by which our bodies will be maintained in healthful vigor. Whatever we can attain by our mental powers, we are to attain by them. Physical and metaphysical science alike lie remote from the object matter of revelation. The Bible never gives us any scientific knowledge in a scientific way. If it did, it would be leaving its own proper domain. When it seems to give us any such knowledge, as in the first chapter of Genesis, what it says has always reference to man. The first chapter of Genesis does not tell us how the earth was formed absolutely, but how it was prepared and fitted for man. Look at the work of the fourth day. Does any man suppose that the stars were set in the expanse of heaven absolutely that men might know what time of the year it was? They *did* render men this service, but this was not their great use. As the Bible speaks to all people, at all times, it must use popular language.'

This writer, like many others when they approach this subject, speaks timidly, and in consequence somewhat vaguely and obscurely; but his meaning is, that we must expect the Bible, on scientific subjects, to speak, not according to science, but according to the prevailing ideas of their times on scientific subjects; and that we are to regard the Bible as our teacher, not on every subject to which it may allude, or on which it may speak, but only on matters of religious truth and duty.

The following is from the Rev. H. W. Beecher.

Hosted by Google

'Matthew says, that Jesus dwelt in Nazareth; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. No such line has ever been found in the prophets.

'Infinite ingenuity of learning has been brought to bear upon this difficulty, without in the slightest degree solving it.

'What would happen if it should be said that Matthew recorded the current impression of his time in attributing this declaration to the Old Testament Prophets? Would a mere error of reference invalidate the trustworthiness of the evangelist? We lean our whole weight [in other matters] upon men who are fallible. Must a record be totally infallible before it can be trusted at all? Navigators trust ship, cargo, and the lives of all on board, to calculations based on tables of logarithms, knowing that there never was a set [of logarithms] computed, without machinery, that had not some error in it. The supposition, that to admit that there are immaterial and incidental mistakes in Sacred Writ would break the confidence of men in it, is contradicted by the uniform experience of life, and by the whole procedure of society.

'On the contrary, the shifts and ingenuities to which critics are obliged to resort, either blunt the sense of truth, or disgust men with the special pleading of critics, and tend powerfully to general unbelief.

'The theory of inspiration must be founded upon the grounds on which the Scriptures themselves found it. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." (2 Tim. 3: 16, 17.)

'Under this declaration, no more can be claimed for the doctrine of inspiration than that there shall have been such an influence exerted upon the formation of the record, that it shall be the truth respecting God, and no falsity; that it shall so expound the duty of man under God's moral government, as to secure, in all who will, a true holiness; that it shall contain no errors which can affect the essential truths taught, or which shall cloud the reason or sully the moral sense.

Hosted by Google

'But it is not right or prudent to infer from the Biblical statement of inspiration, that it makes provision for the very words and sentences; that it shall raise the inspired penmen above the possibility of literary inaccuracy, or minor or immaterial mistakes. It is enough if the Bible be a sure and sufficient guide to spiritual morality and rational piety. To erect for it a claim to absolute literary infallibility, or to infallibility in things not directly pertaining to faith, is to weaken its real authority, and to turn it aside from its avowed purpose. The theory of verbal inspiration brings a strain upon the Word of God which it cannot bear. If rigorously pressed, it tends powerfully to bigotry on the one side, and to infallibility on the other.

'The inspiration of holy men is to be construed, as we construe the doctrine of an over-ruling and special Providence; of the divine supervision and guidance of the church; of the faithfulness of God in answering prayer. The truth of these doctrines is not inconsistent with the existence of a thousand evils, mischiefs, and mistakes, and with the occurrence of wanderings long and almost fatal. Yet the general supervision of a Divine Providence is rational. We might expect that there would be an analogy between God's care and education of the race, and His care of the Bible in its formation.

'Around the central certainty of saving truth are wrapped the swaddling-clothes of human language. Neither the condition of the human understanding, nor the nature of human speech, which is the vehicle of thought, admits of more than a fragmentary and partial presentation of truth. "For we know in part, and we prophesy in part." (1 Cor. xiii. 9.) Still less are we then to expect that there will be perfection in this vehicle. And incidental errors, which do not reach the substance of truth and duty, which touch only contingent and external elements, are not to be regarded as inconsistent with the fact that the Scriptures were *inspired of God*. Nor will our reverence for the Scriptures be impaired if, in such cases, it be frankly said, '*There* is an insoluble difficulty.' Such a course is far less dangerous to the moral sense than that pernicious ingenuity which, assuming that there can be no

Hosted by Google

literal errors in Scripture, resorts to subtle arts of criticism, improbabilities of statement, and violence of construction, such as, if made use of in the intercourse of men in daily life, would break up society and destroy all faith of man in man.

'We dwell at length on this topic now, that we may not be obliged to recur to it when, as will be the case, other instances arise in which there is no solution of unimportant, though real, literary difficulties.

'There are a multitude of minute, and on the whole, as respects the substance of truth, not important questions and topics, which, like a fastened door, refuse to be opened by any key which learning has brought to them. It is better to let them stand closed than, like impatient mastiffs, after long barking in vain, to lie whining at the door, unable to enter, and unwilling to go away. *Life of Jesus, pp.* 77—81.

The Rev. G. Rawlinson, in an able lecture in defence of the Bible, published by the CHRISTIAN EVIDENCE SOCIETY of London, acknowledges that there are matters of uncertainty in some parts of the Old Testament history, and says, 'The time allowed by the common version of the Bible for all the events which took place from the days of Noah, to the birth of Christ, and for all the changes by which the various races of men were formed, by which civilization and the arts were developed, etc., is less than 2,600 years. Now this is quite insufficient. How is this difficulty to be met? We answer; a special uncertainty attaches to the numbers in this case. They are given differently in the different ancient versions. The Samaritan version extends the time 650 years. The Septuagint extends it eight or nine hundred years. If more time still be thought wanting for the development of government, art, science, language, diversities of races, etc., I should not be afraid to grant that the original record of Scripture on this point may have been lost, and that the true chronology cannot now be ascertained. Nothing in ancient manuscripts is so liable to corruption as the numbers. The original mode of writing them was by signs not very different from one another, and thus it happens that in almost all ancient works, the numbers are found to be deserving of very little reliance.'

Hosted by Google

But the errors and uncertainty with regard to numbers amount to nothing. They do not affect the Bible as the great religious instructor of the world.

The sun has its spots, dark ones and large ones too; and the face of the moon is not all of equal brightness; but are the sun and the moon less useful on that account? Do they not answer the ends for which they were made, and are not those ends the most important and desirable imaginable? Cavillers might say, if the sun and moon were made to be lights of the earth, why are they not *all* light, and why is not their light of the greatest brilliancy possible? But we too have a right to ask, Do they not give us light enough? And is not their light as brilliant as is desirable? Will the caviller prove that the sun and moon would be greater blessings if their light were more intense, or more abundant? Men may have too much light as well as too little. If light exceeds a certain degree of intensity, it dazzles and blinds instead of enlightening. It is well to have a little warmth, but if the heat be increased beyond a certain point, it burns and consumes, instead of comforting and cheering.

The disposition of the caviller is anything but enviable, and if God were to take him at his word, his lot would be anything but comfortable. Happy are they who accept God's gifts as He presents them, with thankfulness, and use them in His service faithfully, rejoicing and trusting in His infinite wisdom and love.

What a man wants in a book are instruction, impulse, strength, correction, regeneration, consolation, lessons fit to furnish him to every good work, something to give pleasure, supply exercise for his intellect, conscience, affections: and the Bible is all.

If God may employ an imperfect and fallible man to preach for him, allowing a portion of his imperfections to mingle with his message, why might He not employ an imperfect and fallible man to write for Him, allowing a portion of his imperfections to mingle with his writing?

The following is from the BISHOP OF LONDON.

'The vindication of the supernatural and authoritative character of the Bible has too often been embarrassed by

Hosted by Google

speculative theories not authorized by the statements of the Bible itself.'

'It is no reply to the essential claims of the Bible to be a supernatural revelation from God, to show that certain speculative theories concerning the manner and degree of its inspiration are untenable.'

From whose works the following quotation is made, we do not remember.

'The watchword of the Reformation was, 'The sufficiency of the Scriptures for salvation.'

'Definite theories of inspiration were seldom propounded till of late years.

'The Bible is a revelation of spiritual truth communicated chiefly in illustrations and figurative language, and making use of the history, chronology, and other sciences of the age, as vehicles or helps. This principle will explain those seeming contradictions [to science] which result from the use of popular language, as when the sun and moon are said to stand still, or when the sun is said to go from one end of the heaven to the other, etc. It will also account for many actual errors in science, chronology, and history, should such be found to exist. The Scriptures were not intended to teach men these things, but to reveal what relates to our connection with moral law, and the spiritual world, and our salvation. In teaching these things, the writers availed themselves of the *popular* language, and the current science and literature of the age in which they lived. As in the present day a man may be well instructed in Christian doctrine, and have the unction from the Holy One, while ignorant of the teachings of modern science, so likewise it was possible to those who first received religious truth and were commissioned to declare it. The presence of the Holy Spirit no more preserved men from errors in science in the one case than in the other. One may as well seek to study surveying in a biography of Washington, as the details of geology or chronology in Genesis.

'The proper test to apply to the Gospels is, whether each gives us a picture of the life and ministry of Jesus that is self-consistent and consistent with the others; such as would be suitable to the use of believers.

Hosted by Google

'Many of the apparent contradictions of the Bible may be explained by the mistakes of transcribers, or in some other way equally natural; but, as the Bishop of London has well remarked, 'When laborious ingenuity has exerted itself to collect a whole store of such difficulties, supposing them to be real, what on earth does it signify? They may be left quietly to float away without our being able to solve them, if we bear in mind the acknowledged fact, that there is a human element in the Bible.'

'What if many of the numbers given in Exodus should, as Bishop Colenso asserts, be inaccurate? What is to be gained by assertions or denials relative to matters which have for ever passed out of the reach of our verification? And what if, here and there, a law should seem to us strange and unaccountable; an event difficult to comprehend; a statement to involve an apparent contradiction? What has all this to do with the essential *value* of the Book. Absolutely nothing, unless thereby its [honesty] truthfulness can be set aside.

'If error were *cunningly interspersed* with truth in the Bible, the case would be different. But it is *not* so. The Book, as a whole, and as it stands, is wholesome and useful; each portion of it has its proper place, and is adequate to fulfil its appointed end. But everything in the Book does not take hold alike on the heart and conscience. It may be very interesting, as indeed it is, to trace on the map the various journeyings of St. Paul, or the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness; to note a hundred designed coincidences, etc. Yet all this may be done without the slightest moral or spiritual benefit to the man who does it. And, of course, all this may be left undone by others without the slightest spiritual loss or disadvantage.'

The following may be our own.

The great thing is to use the Scriptures as a means of instruction in religious truth and Christian duty, and as a means of improvement in all moral excellence and Christian usefulness.

Set the doctrine of Scripture inspiration too high, and people, finding that the Scriptures do not come up to it, will conclude that the doctrine is false,—that the Scrip-

Hosted by Google

tures are not inspired,—that they do not differ from other books,—that divine revelation is a fiction,—that religion is a delusion,—and that the true philosophy of life and of the universe is infidelity. And the Scriptures do *not* come up to the doctrine of inspiration held by many. It is impossible they should. *No* book written in human language *can* come up to it. What they say an inspired book *must* be, no book on earth ever was, and no book ever will be. And infidels see it, and are confirmed in their infidelity. And others see it and become infidels. And Christians argue with them and are overcome. And others are perplexed and bewildered, and obliged to close their eyes to facts, and though they cling to their belief, they are troubled with fears and misgivings as long as they live.

If men would be strong in the faith, and strong in its defence, they should accept nothing as part of their creed but what is strictly true.

There are passages which speak of the sun smiting men by day, and there is one at least which speaks of the moon smiting men by night, and both, for any thing I know, may be literally true. But suppose it were proved that neither the sun nor the moon ever smites men, would my faith in Christianity, or in the divine inspiration of the Bible, be shaken thereby? Not at all. Nor would it destroy or weaken the effect of the pasages on my mind in which those allusions to the sun and moon occur. I should still believe in the substantial truth of the passages, namely, that, day and night, the good man is secure under the protection of God.

A man says that he has lately been under 'disastrous influences.' Literally, the words disastrous influences mean the influences of unfriendly stars. But there are no unfriendly stars. Then why does he use such an expression? Because, though it does not now in its current meaning refer to the stars at all, it means calamitous, unfavorable, influences. I do not believe that the sun like a strong man runs a race: I believe its motion is only apparent,—that the *real* motion is in the earth. But do I therefore question the divine inspiration of the Bible which uses that expression? Not at all; for the words are substantially true. And so in a hundred other cases.

Hosted by Google

And so in passages of other kinds. It does not matter to me whether the account of creation in Genesis answers literally to the real processes revealed by Geology, or whether the account of the flood answers exactly to past facts. Both accounts are perfect as lessons of divine truth and duty, and that is enough.

Those who undertake to prove that every passage of the Bible is literally true, must fail. If they *were* all literally true, they would never have done. There are more difficult passages, and more apparent little contradictions, than any man could go through in a life-time. I would no more undertake such a task than I would undertake to prove that every leaf, and every flower, and every seed, of every plant on earth is perfect, and that each is exactly like its fellows. God's honor and man's welfare are as much concerned in the one as in the other. They are concerned in neither. The leaves, the flowers, and the seeds of plants are right enough,—they are as perfect as they need to be,—and I ask no more. And the Bible is as perfect as it needs to be, and I am satisfied.

The following is abridged from a work entitled CHRISTIANITY AND OUR ERA, by the Rev. G. Gilfillan of Scotland.

Mr. Gilfillan speaks of it as a 'Generally admitted fact, that there is a human, as well as a divine element in Scripture,' and adds, 'that this should modify our judgment in considering perplexing discrepancies and minor objections. There are spots in the sun; there are bogs on the earth; and why should the perplexities in a book, which is a multifarious collection of poetico-theological and historical tracts, written in various ages, and subject, in their history, to many human vicissitudes, bewilder and appal us? The candid inquirer will be satisfied if, from the unity of spirit, the truth and simplicity of manner, the majesty of thought, the heavenliness of tone, and the various collateral and external proofs, he gathers a *general* inspiration in the Bible, and the general truth of Christianity. Logical strictness, perfect historic accuracy, systematic arrangement, etc., could not be expected in a book of intuitions and bursts of inspiration; the authors of which seemed often the child-like organs of the power within. It seemed enough that there should be no wilful mis-statements, and no errors but

Hosted by Google

those arising from the inevitable conditions to which all writings are liable. The skeptic who proceeds to peruse the Bible, expecting it everywhere to be conformable to the highest ideal standard—that there shall be nothing to perplex his understanding, to try his belief, or to offend his taste, will be disappointed, and will either give up his task, or go on in weariness and hesitation. On the other hand, if he be told to prepare for historical discrepancies, for staggering statements, for phrases more plain than elegant, and for sentences of inscrutable darkness, he will be far more likely to come to a satisfactory conclusion. And the apparent dark spots will only serve to increase the surrounding splendor. We therefore cry to the skeptic who purposes to explore the region of revelation; 'We promise you no pavement of gold; you will find your path an Alpine road, steep, rugged, with profound chasms below, and giddy precipices above, and thick mists often closing in around, but rewarding you by prospects of ineffable loveliness, by gleams of far-revealing light, and delighting you with a thousand unearthly pleasures. *Try* this pass, with a sincere desire to come at truth, and with hope and courage in your hearts, and you will be richly rewarded, and the toils of the ascent will seem to you afterwards only a portion of your triumph.'

One writer gives the following definition of inspiration. 'A supernatural, divine influence on the sacred writers, by which they were qualified to communicate moral and religious truth with authority.'

This is tolerable.

Another writer says, 'It is a miraculous influence, by which men are enabled to receive and communicate divine truth.'

This too is tolerable, notwithstanding the word miraculous.

Another writer says, 'There has been a great diversity of opinions among the best men of all ages, as to the nature and extent of Bible inspiration.'

He might have added, that these opinions have generally been nothing more than opinions,—mere fancies, theories, framed without regard to facts.

Another writer says, 'It should be remembered, that

Hosted by Google

the inspiration which breathes through the Book is not of a scientific, critical, or historical character, but exclusively religious.'

He means, that while inspiration makes the Bible all that is desirable as a teacher on religious matters, it does not, on other subjects, raise it above the views of the ages and places in which it was written. For he adds, 'The sacred record is not in every respect faultless. It is not free from literary, typographical, and other defects. Nature herself, where no one can deny the finger of God, has imperfections. The Book presents the same characteristics as the best and highest of God's other gifts, namely, not the outward symmetry of a finite and mechanical perfection, but the inward, elastic, and reproductive power of a divine life!'

The meaning of this latter vague and wordy sentence seems to be, that the inspiration of the Bible is such as to make it a powerful means of producing spiritual life,—real religion; but not such as to preserve it from little ordinary human errors and imperfections.

This writer represents Dr. Stowe as saying, 'Inspiration, according to the Bible, is just that measure of extraordinary Divine influence afforded to the sacred speakers and writers, which was necessary to secure the purpose intended, and no more.'

This too we can accept. It does not authorize us to expect of the Bible, or require us to prove with regard to it, any thing more, than that it is adapted to be the religious and moral instructor of mankind.

This same writer represents Dr. Robinson as saying, 'Whenever, and as far as, divine assistance was necessary, it was always afforded.' This too is tolerable.

One writer says, 'Divine inspiration cannot be claimed for the transcribers or translators of the original Scriptures.'

We think it can. We see no reason to doubt, but that many of the transcribers and translators of the Scriptures were as much under the influence of the Holy Spirit,—the spirit of love, and truth, and all goodness,—as the original writers. Our impression is, that the common version is as truly the work of divine inspiration, as any book on earth.

One writer says, 'The language of the whole Bible is

Hosted by Google

that of appearances. In drawing illustrations from nature, the writers could not have been understood, unless they had used figures and forms of speech based on nature as popularly understood. Hence the heavenly bodies are spoken of as revolving round the earth, the ant as storing up food in summer, and the earth as being immovable, all of which are now known to be contrary to [strict] truth.'

This writer, like some others, feeling as if he had gone too far in uttering words so true, contradicts them a few pages after, and makes a number of statements which remind one of what the Apostle says, about handling the word of God deceitfully. One would be tempted to charge him with 'cunning craftiness,' only his craft is not very cunning. When religious teachers act so unfaithfully, they have no right to complain if people lose all confidence in their honesty.

We grant, however, that the temptation to keep back the truth on this point is very strong, and we must not be hard on the timid ones. It is not always a fear of personal loss or suffering that keeps men from speaking freely on religious subjects, but a dread of lessening their usefulness, of hurting the minds of good though mistaken people, or of disturbing and injuring the Church.

But it is no use trying to cheat unbelievers. You cannot do it. They will find you out, and be all the more suspicious and skeptical in consequence. We must deal with them honestly; tell them nothing but what is true, and use no arguments but what are sound and unanswerable. Advocates of Christianity have made numberless unbelievers by teaching erroneous doctrines, and by using weak and vicious arguments. The Christian should so speak and act, that it shall be impossible for any one ever to find him in the wrong.

The following is probably our own.

The historical difficulties of the Bible amount to little. They do not affect its scope and tendency, as a moral and spiritual teacher. Nor are they inconsistent with the doctrine that the Scriptures were given by inspiration of God, as that doctrine is presented in the Scriptures themselves. They may be inconsistent with the views of Scripture inspiration taught by certain Theologians; but all we have

Hosted by Google

to do is to set the views of these Theologians aside, and content ourselves with the simple teachings of Scripture.

Now the doctrine of Scripture inspiration as taught by the Scriptures themselves, gives me no authority to expect the Scriptures to be free from historical and scientific errors, or from any of those so-called imperfections which are inseparable from human language or from human nature. It authorizes me to expect that the Scriptures shall aim at my moral and spiritual instruction and salvation, and that they shall be adapted to answer that great end. It authorizes me to expect that the body and substance of the Book shall be true and good, and that a spirit of wisdom and purity and love shall pervade the Book, giving it a rousing and a sanctifying power. It authorizes me to expect in it all that is necessary to bring me into harmony and fellowship with Christ, to fill me with His spirit, to change me into His likeness, to enable me to live as He lived, and to labor as He labored. It authorizes me to expect in the Bible all that is necessary to comfort me in affliction, to give me patience, to sustain my hopes, and to support and cheer me in the hour of death. And all this I find in infinite abundance. I find it in a multitude of forms,—forms the most touching and impressive. I find it presented in the plainest, simplest style. I find in the Bible an infinite treasury of all that is holy, just and good,—of all that is beautiful, sublime, and glorious,—of all that is quickening, renovating, strengthening,—of all that is cheering, exhilarating, transporting,—of all that I can wish for or enjoy, —of all that my powers can comprehend,—of all that my soul can appropriate and use. I find in it, in short, riches unsearchable, beyond all that I could ever have asked, or thought. And what can I wish for more?

God has given us no perfect teachers, no perfect preachers, no perfect churches; why should we suppose it necessary that He should give us a perfect book? He has not given us any perfect books on medicine, on diet, on trades, on politics, on farming, on gardening, on education, or on poetry. Why should we expect Him to give us one on religion? As a matter of fact, He has not done so. Our common Bible is a translation. So are all the common Bibles in the world. And all translations are imperfect.

Hosted by Google

The translations are made from Greek and Hebrew Bibles, and those are all imperfect. The Greek and Hebrew Bibles are compiled or formed from Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. But these also are imperfect. They all differ from each other. And no one can tell which is nearest to the originals, for the originals are lost. So that whether there was an absolutely perfect Bible at first or not, there is no such Bible now. God Himself has so ordered things, that all the Bibles in the world, like all the preachers, churches, and teachers, share the innocent imperfections of our common humanity.

Suppose the original Bible to have been perfect, and to have been preserved from destruction, only one person could have possessed it. The rest would have had to be content with imperfect human copies. God might Himself have written perfect Bibles for all mankind, but He did not choose to do it. Or He might have made perfect copies of the original Bible, but He did not choose to do even that. He might have employed a few legions of angels in making copies of the Bible; but *that* He did not do. He left the work to be done by men, and men have done it, as they do all their work, imperfectly.

Still, they have done it well enough. The poorest manuscript Bible in the world is good enough. The most imperfect Greek and Hebrew Bible is good enough. The poorest translation is good enough. It is so good, we mean, that those who are able to read it, may learn from it all that is necessary to make them good, and useful, and happy on earth, and to fit them for the blessedness of eternal life in heaven.

There is a sense in which no translation of the Scriptures is good enough, if we can make it better; and we have no desire to prevent men from doing their best to improve the translations in all languages as much as possible. But do not let them make the impression that a perfect translation is necessary or even possible; for it is not. God has caused the Bible to be written in such a way, He has put all important matters of truth and duty in such a variety of forms, that any translation, made with a reasonable amount of learning and honesty, is sure to make things intelligible enough in some of the forms in which they are presented in the Book.

Hosted by Google

The Bible, like the Church and the Ministry, is a great mixture of the human and the divine. There is not a single book, nor a single passage perhaps, in the whole volume, in which the weaknesses of man and the perfections of God are not blended. Everywhere we have revelations of the divine glory, and everywhere we have manifestations of human imperfection. We have human errors side by side with divine truths. We have neither a perfect teacher nor a perfect example in the whole Book, but one; and of that one we have not a perfect record, either of His teachings or His life. We have nothing but brief, imperfect, fragmentary records of either. They are perfect enough; but they are very imperfect. And Moses, and the Prophets, and the Apostles, are perfect enough; but they are all imperfect. The Bible is perfect enough; but it is, according to the ordinary meaning of the word, still imperfect.

We do not need perfection, we do not need infallibility, in anything; and we have it not. Imperfection is better, and that we have in everything.

And all this is in keeping with God's doings in other cases. 'The inspiration of the Holy One giveth man understanding;' but does not make his mind infallible. Christians 'have an unction, an inspiration, from the Holy One, and know all things:' and yet they do not know all things; but only those things which pertain to God and Christ: and even their knowledge of these is acquired not all at once, or without the use of means; but by degrees only, and by the faithful use of their natural powers.

The Apostles were not machines. Their inspiration did not take away their liberty, or suspend the use of their natural powers. Nor did it teach them natural science, or history; or lift them above ordinary, innocent errors. Nor did it cause them to learn all Christian truth at once. They gained their knowledge by degrees. Some imagine, that the moment the Apostles received the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, they were perfect and infallible; whereas it took them nearly ten years to learn that they were to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. They had the words of Christ, 'Go ye into *all the world*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*;' yet it required nearly ten years, and a

Hosted by Google

special vision, to make them understand that *every creature* included the Gentiles.

Nor have we any proof that the Spirit ever made the Apostles infallible in every little matter. Paul says, when speaking of the resurrection, 'That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.' Now the truth is, that the seed from which the harvest springs, does not die. It simply expands and unfolds. His doctrine was right, but the notion on which he grounded his illustration of it was an error. But it answered his purpose. And there *is* a sense in which seed dies. It ceases to be a seed in becoming a plant.

Bishop Watson says, 'a grain of wheat must become *rotten* before it can sprout;' but that is not the case. It ceases to be a mere grain to become a plant; but it does not become rotten; it remains alive and sound.

The Apostle is an able minister, a glorious interpreter of Christ and His doctrine; and there is nothing seriously amiss in his illustrations; but several of them are based on prevailing misconceptions.

Some say, 'If the Apostles were not infallible in everything, their writings would be of no use to us. If they might err in one thing, they might err in others, and we could have no certainty of the truth of anything.' But that is not true. On one occasion, Paul says, 'I knew not that it was God's high-priest.' And on another, he says, 'I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius.' Afterwards he says, 'I baptized also the house of Stephanas:' and he finishes by saying, 'I know not whether I baptized any other.' Will you say, 'If Paul could be ignorant or mistaken about the high-priest, or the number of persons he had baptized; he might be ignorant or mistaken on every subject?' The truth is, a man who was so much taken up with great things, would be sure to think but little of small things. His determination to know nothing but Christ; would be sure to keep him from wasting his time or strength on trifles. A man's ignorance on some points is often proportioned to his knowledge on others. And Paul is all the more trustworthy on great matters of Christian truth and duty, because of his indifference to matters of little or no importance. And say what we will, the

Hosted by Google

Apostles were not infallible on every point, and they never professed to be so. They professed to be inspired, and inspired they were, but they did not profess to be wholly infallible, and it is certain they were not so.

And the admission of the truth on this point, will *not* destroy our confidence in them on others. We may believe that the Apostles were fallible on matters of little moment, and have the fullest assurance possible that they were right on matters of great importance.

The Apostles themselves were sufficiently assured of the truth of those impressions which they had received about Christ through their eyes and ears; yet neither the eyes nor the ears of man are always or absolutely infallible. I have myself mistaken blue for green, and yellow for white; and I recollect two occasions on which coal or jet, seemed, at a distance, in the sunlight, as white as snow. And I have often thought things to be moving, which were at rest; and things to be at rest, which were moving. Yet I have the fullest confidence in my eyes. I have sometimes been mistaken with regard to sounds. I have thought a sound to be near, when it was far off; and I have thought a sound to be far off, when it was near. And I have often mistaken one sound for another. Yet I have all the confidence I need to have in my ears. Both eyes and ears may need the help of the mind at times; but the mind is always at hand with its help. In short, I know that all my senses are fallible; yet on every point of moment I have all the assurance, with regard to things sensible, that is needful to my welfare.

And so with regard to religious matters. There is nothing like omniscience,—nothing like infinite or absolutely perfect knowledge or infallibility in any man: yet every one may have all the information and all the assurance on things moral and spiritual needful to his comfort and salvation.

Our assurance of the truth and excellency of Christian doctrine rests on something better, surer, than theological and metaphysical niceties. You who fancy that your strong and heart-cheering faith rests on theological theories, and that if those theories were exploded, it would perish, are, happily, under a great mistake. Your faith, and hope,

Hosted by Google

and joy, rest on the harmony between Christianity and your souls. My faith and trust in the outward world, and my infinite appreciation of its arrangements, rest, not on any philosophical theory; but on the wonderful, the perfect adaptation of every thing to my nature, to my wants, to my comfort and welfare. Nature answers to me, fits into me, at every point. I am just the kind of being nature was made for; and nature is just the kind of world my being requires. They match. They answer to each other exactly, all round, and make one glorious and blessed whole. And this is the secret of my trust in nature.

And so it is with regard to Christianity and my soul. They are made for each other. They fit each other. My soul just wants what Christianity brings; and Christianity just brings what my soul requires. It answers to my soul, as light and beauty answer to the eye, and as sound and music answer to the ear, and the whole of nature to the whole of man. There is neither want, nor superfluity, nor disagreement. Christianity and my soul, like nature and my physical being, are a glorious match. They are one: as I and my life are one. Christ is my life. Christ is my all. And He *is* all that my soul requires or desires.

And this is the ground of the good Christian's faith. It is not external or historical evidence; it is not metaphysical niceties or theories; it is not the endless mass of jarring evidences of any kind which lie in misty, musty, dusty volumes on the shelves of dreamy, doting divines, that makes you feel at rest in Jesus; but Jesus Himself, whose fulness just answers to your wants, and whose life and love just make your heaven. It is just that, and nothing more.

There is a story of a judge who was celebrated for the wisdom and justice of his judgments, but often censured for the weakness or folly of the reasons which he gave for them. Many Christians resemble this judge. They make a wise and worthy profession of faith; but when they attempt to give reasons for their belief, they betray the most lamentable ignorance. They *have* good reasons, but they cannot put them into words. They do not always know what their reasons for believing are. The reasons they assign are not their real reasons. They believed, and

Hosted by Google

believed on good grounds, for sufficient reasons, years before they heard of the reasons they give for their belief to those who question them on the subject. The reasons they assign did not at first convince them, and they are not the kind of reasons likely to convince others. And it would be better if, instead of assigning them, they were to say: 'Well; I do not know that I can tell you the reasons why I believe the Bible; but I have reasons. I am satisfied my belief is right. I am satisfied the Bible is the right thing for me. I meet with things in it that make me feel very happy. I meet with things in it that will not let me do wrong; that will keep impelling me to do right, to do good. I meet with things in it that support me in trouble; that make me thankful in prosperity; that fill me with good thoughts, good feelings, good purposes, good hopes, great peace, sweet rest, strong confidence, and a blessed prospect of a better life. I like the Bible God: He is a great protector, and a blessed comforter. I like the Bible story about Jesus, and all the glorious things it says about His love and salvation. In short, the Bible is a great part of my life, my soul, my joy, my strength, my being, and I don't know what I could do without it. I cannot argue. I don't know the reasons why I believe. But the Bible just suits my soul, and I am inclined to believe that the world would be a dark place, and life a poor affair, without its blessed revelations and precious promises.

Now in speaking thus, most men would really, without knowing it, be giving the reasons or grounds of their faith. The great reason really is, the perfect adaptation of the Bible to their nature and wants. They believe unconsciously and unthinkingly in the divinity of nature, on account of the wonderful adaptation of its provisions to their natural wants. They believe in virtuous love, and honorable marriage, and family life, and natural affections, and friendship, and society, and government, and law, on similar grounds. The reasons of their faith are real, and good, and strong; but like the roots of a tree, they are low down, out of sight, under the ground. They do not reflect on them, dig them up, bring them to the light, and give them a critical examination.

This internal evidence is gaining favor day by day. It

Hosted by Google

is preferred by the ablest modern writers to all others. It was the evidence that vanquished the infidel socialists of five and thirty years ago. It is the evidence that makes our modern infidel advocates wince and waver. They hardly think it necessary to notice the historical evidences. They know that they seldom get hold of men's hearts. But they cannot afford to despise the internal evidences. They are a real power. Thousands are touched by a sight of Jesus as presented in the Gospels, for one that is moved by arguments from miracles or prophecies. Even the miracles of Jesus owe their chief power to their benevolent character.

The ablest American writer on the Evidences of Christianity, Rev. Mark Hopkins, makes the moral and internal evidence almost everything, and the external ones next to nothing.

The Rev. F. C. Cooke, Canon of Exeter, in his lecture before the Christian Evidence Society of London, says, 'The one great evidence, the master evidence, the evidence with which all other evidences will stand or fall, is Christ Himself speaking by His own word. It is the character of Jesus that makes men feel that He and His religion are divine. It is this that warms men's hearts, and wins their love, and produces a faith full of life and power. Other evidences apart from this leave men cold, and indifferent, or opposed to Christ.' But more on this point hereafter.

CHAPTER XV.

GOES INTO POLITICS. ARRESTED. LODGED IN PRISON. ELECTED TOWN COUNCILLOR, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, &C.

In 1846, I began to dabble in politics. And my views of political subjects were as much out of the ordinary way as my views on matters pertaining to religion. I was a republican. I would have no King, no Queen, no House of Lords, and no State Church. I would abolish the laws

Hosted by Google

of entail and primogeniture, and reduce land to a level with other kinds of property. The sale of land should be as untrammelled as that of common merchandise, and it should be as liable to be taken for debt. I broached startling views with regard to the right of property in land, and urged that as it was naturally common property, it should be considered as belonging, in part, to the nation, or Government, and made to bear the principal burden of taxation. I recommended that the property of the church should be used for the promotion of education. I proposed to divide the country into equal electoral districts, and give to every man who was not a criminal, a vote for members of Parliament. As a rule, I held up America as an example in matters of government, but objected to a Senate and a four years' President, preferring to place all power in the hands of one Body, the direct representatives of the people. A committee of that Body should be the *ministry*, and the chairman of that committee the President.

I really believed that this would be the perfection of Government. And if all men were naturally good, as Unitarianism taught, what could be wiser or better calculated to secure the happiness of a nation, than to give every one an equal share of the power? I believed with Paine, that a pure and unqualified democracy would secure the strictest economy, the greatest purity, the best laws, and the most perfect administration of the laws. I also believed that a pure unmixed democracy would prevent insurrections, rebellions, and civil war, and that it would promote peace with all the world. True, I believed the people would require education, but I also believed that an ultra democracy would see to it that the people *were* educated, and educated in the best possible way. Were not the people educated in America? And were we not taught that the educational system of America was the result of its democratic form of Government? And were not Price and Priestley democrats? And were not Channing and Parker, the two great lights of Unitarianism in America, democrats? Democracy then was the remedy for the evils of the world; the one thing needful to the salvation of our race.

More extravagant or groundless notions have seldom entered the mind of man. Yet I accepted them as the true

Hosted by Google

political gospel, and exerted myself to the utmost to propagate them among the masses of my countrymen. The Irish reformers demanded a repeal of the Union and the right of self-government. I advocated both repeal for Ireland and Republicanism for England. And in all my speeches and publications I gave utterance to the bitterest reproaches against the aristocracy, and against all who took their part. I had suffered grievously in my early days. I had been subjected to all the hardships and miseries of extreme poverty. I had spent three years on the verge of starvation, never knowing, more than twice or thrice during the whole of that dreadful period, what it was to have the gnawings of hunger appeased by a plentiful meal. I had seen one near and dear to me perish for want of food, and had escaped the same sad fate myself by a kind of miracle only. And all these sufferings I believed to have been caused by the corn and provision laws, enacted and maintained by the selfishness of the aristocracy. I regarded the aristocracy therefore, and all who took their part, as my personal enemies; as men who had robbed me of my daily bread, and all but sent me to an untimely grave. I regarded them as the greatest of criminals, as the enemies of the human race. I considered them answerable for the horrors of the first great French Revolution, and for the miseries of the Irish famine. I gave them credit for nothing good. True, they had allowed the Reform Bill of 1831 to pass, but not till they saw that a refusal would cause a revolution. They had accepted free trade, but not till they saw that to reject it would be their ruin. I had not then learnt that in legislating with an eye to their own interests they had done no more than other classes are accustomed to do when they get possession of power. I had not yet discovered that the germs of selfish legislation and tyranny are sown in the hearts of all, and that the faults of the higher classes prevail among all classes under different forms. I saw the misdoings of the parties in power, and looked no further, and I heaped on them the bitterest invectives. My passionate hatred of the privileged classes, expressed in the plainest English, and justified, apparently, by so much that was bad in the history of their doings, roused the indignation of my hearers and readers to the highest pitch. I com-

Hosted by Google

menced a periodical, which at once became a favorite with the ultra democrats, and speedily gained an extensive circulation.

In 1847, in my *Companion to the Almanacs*, I foretold the French Revolution of 1848. How it happened I do not exactly know; but I have, at times, made remarkable guesses, and this perhaps was one of them. When the Revolution took place it caused a tremendous excitement in every nation in Europe. Kings and emperors found it necessary to promise their subjects constitutional governments. It turned the heads of many people in England. Numbers who had never been politicians before, became politicians then. And many politicians who had previously been moderate in their views, became wild and revolutionary. The Chartists clamored for "the Charter, the whole Charter, and nothing but the Charter." Meetings were held in almost every part of the country, and speeches were delivered, and publications were circulated, of a most inflammatory character. Monster demonstrations were got up, and many who did not take part in them encouraged them, in hopes that they would frighten the Government into large concessions to the party of reform. A meeting of the leading reformers was called in London, and I was present. Young Stansfield, now member of Parliament, was there, and Sergeant Parry, and Edward Miall, and Henry Vincent, and a number of others. The Chartists arranged for a convention in London, and I was sent as a member. The meeting cut but a pitiful figure. It soon got into unspeakable disorder. The second day the question was, "What means should we recommend our constituents to use in order to obtain the reforms they desired?" I, extravagant as I had shown myself on many points, had always set myself against resort to violence. My counsel therefore was for peaceful, legal measures. Ernest Jones and several others clamored for organization, with a view to an armed insurrection. By and by we got into confusion again. Some one hinted that agents of the Government were present, and that we were venturing on dangerous ground. Ernest Jones replied, "It is not for us to be afraid of the Government, but for the Government to be afraid of us." Confusion got worse confounded. I began to be ashamed of my position. Mad

Hosted by Google

as I was, I was not insane enough for the leaders of the convention, so I started home.

On Good Friday there was an immense meeting on Skircoat Moor, near Halifax, and I was one of the speakers. It was the largest assembly I ever saw. The speakers that preceded me talked about the uselessness of talk, and called for action. I talked about the usefulness of talk, and contended that resort to violence would be both folly and wickedness. While I was speaking, a man in the crowd on my left fired a pistol, as if to intimidate me, and encourage the party favorable to insurrection. I at once denounced him as a traitor, who had come to hurry the people into crime, or a madman, whom no one ought for a moment to think of imitating. The physical force men were terribly vexed at my remarks, but the mass of the meeting applauded my counsels, and the immense concourse dispersed and went home, without either perpetrating a crime, or meeting with an accident.

My advocacy of peace was duly appreciated by some even of those who lamented the extravagance of my views on other subjects. Others looked on me with unmitigated horror. And the feelings of the richer classes generally against me rose to such a pitch at length, that it was hardly safe for me to go abroad after dark. My religious and political opponents joined their forces, and seemed bent on my destruction. They believed I was undermining the foundations of society, and throwing all things into confusion. They looked on me as little better than a madman, scattering abroad firebrands, arrows, and death. And many treated me as a kind of outlaw, as a man who had no rights that anybody was bound to respect; and rude boys and reckless men took liberties with my property, and even threatened me with death. Insurance companies would not insure my property. Schoolmasters would not admit my sons into their schools, lest others should take their children away. Mothers would not allow their daughters to play with my little daughter, lest she should infect them with her father's heresies.

After the Summer Assizes in 1848, the judge at Liverpool issued Bench warrants for the arrest of a number of political agitators, and in the list of the names of those parties, published in the newspapers, mine was included.

Hosted by Google

As I had always kept within the limits of the law, and as I had received no visit from the police, I supposed that my name had been inserted in the list by mistake. And as I was allowed to remain at large for six weeks, I felt confident that it was either some other Joseph Barker that was wanted, or that my name had been mentioned as one of the parties to be arrested, in jest, or to frighten me into silence.

And the probability is, that if I had kept at home and remained quiet, I should have been permitted to go on with my business undisturbed. But I had an engagement at the end of six weeks, to give two political lectures at Bolton. Just about that time a vacancy occurred in the representation of that Borough, and my friends there, without consulting me, put me forward as a candidate for the vacant seat, and announced my lectures as a statement of my political views, urging the people to come and hear me, and judge for themselves, whether I was not the fittest man to represent them in the National Legislature.

I gave my first lecture on a Friday night, to a crowded and excited audience in the Town Hall, and when I had done, the people passed a resolution by acclamation, to the effect that I was just the man for them, and that they would have no other.

On the Saturday I went on into Wales, to fulfil an engagement which I had for the Sunday, and returned on Monday to give my second lecture. When I got near to Bolton, some friends met me, and told me that the police from Manchester were in the town looking for me, and that I had better go right home. I said, "Nay, I never broke an engagement yet, and I won't do so now;" so I went on. As soon as I had rested myself a little I went direct to the head of the Manchester police, and asked him if he would not allow me to deliver my lecture, promising, if he wished it, to go with him quietly afterwards. He said, No, I could not be allowed to deliver my lecture, and added, that I must consider myself his prisoner. I, of course, offered no resistance, but at his request went with him at once to the railway station. The people had already collected in the streets as I passed along, and there was soon an excited crowd at the station, but I and my friends urged them to be peaceful, and peaceful they were. We were soon at Man-

Hosted by Google

chester, and I was taken at once to the City Jail, where lodgings had been procured for me at the public expense. I passed the night in an underground cell, of the kind provided for criminals of the baser sort. It was anything but clean and sweet, and the conduct of the authorities in placing me in such a hole, when I was not even charged with any gross offence, was neither wise nor just. There were some raised boards on one side, but no bed, no sheets, no blankets.

It was not long before a number of friends who had heard of my arrest, called to see me, and were admitted to my dungeon. They brought some food, some candles, and as they had been informed that I had not been permitted to wash myself before being locked up, one of them, a lady, brought me a moistened towel with which to wipe my face. While these kind friends were trying to make things comfortable for me in my prison, others were running to and fro in search of bail, with a view to my speedy release. One dear, good soul, Mr. Travers Madge, when he heard that I was in jail, started at once for Mossley, a distance of ten or eleven miles, to see Mr. Robinson, a faithful friend, to request him to come to my help. It was two o'clock in the morning when, weary and full of anxiety, he knocked at Mr. Robinson's door. Mr. Robinson rose as soon as he heard his voice, and took him into the house, and requested him to take something to eat, and go to rest till daylight, promising to start with him back to Manchester by the earliest conveyance. But poor Mr. Madge could neither eat nor sleep till his friend was out of prison.

Early in the morning I was brought into court. Bail was offered at once, but the magistrates would not accept bail so early, though offered by well-known and thoroughly respectable parties. The reason was, the election was to take place at Bolton that day, and the magistrates were afraid that if I were allowed to be present, there might be more excitement than would be consistent with the peace and safety of the Borough. So they kept me in prison till four o'clock, when they received intelligence that the election was over, and that all was peaceful. They then set me at liberty. I went at once to Bolton, and found, sure enough, that I had been elected, and that by an immense majority,

Hosted by Google

of more than eight to one. And as no one else was elected at that time, either by show of hands or a poll, I was, in truth, the only legal representative, though I never sat in Parliament. Explanations after.

I was soon surrounded by a vast multitude of people, to whom I gave a short address. As soon as I could get away from the excited crowd, I hastened home. A friend had started for Wortley as soon as I was out of prison, to inform my wife and children that I was safe and at liberty, and he was there when I arrived. It fortunately happened that my family heard of my imprisonment and of my liberation at the same time, and from the same lips, so that the shock they received was not so severe as it might have been. But they were terribly tried. It would be vain to attempt to describe their feelings when they saw me enter the house. I did my best to comfort them, and assured them that I should take no hurt.

I was bound over to appear to take my trial at the Winter Assizes on a charge of sedition and conspiracy, and I set to work to prepare for the event. A good kind friend residing at Barnard Castle, George Brown, Esq., who had helped me in my contests with my theological opponents, helped me in this new trial. He had studied the law all his life, and was a most faithful and trustworthy adviser. He directed me what steps to take, and all his instructions proved wise and good.

My friends set on foot a subscription, to procure for me the ablest defence, and raised, in the course of a few weeks, from two to three hundred pounds. I am amazed when I look back to those days, at the number and ardor of my friends, and at the eagerness with which they hastened to my aid.

Some friends from Holbeck, in the Borough of Leeds, requested me to allow myself to be put forward as a candidate for the Town Council at the approaching election. Not thinking that I should have any chance of being elected, I hesitated; but as they expressed a contrary opinion, and seemed exceedingly anxious that I should place myself in their hands, I complied with their request. They elected me by the largest number of votes that had ever been given for a town councillor in any borough in the

Hosted by Google

kingdom up to that time. My neighbors chose this method of testifying their regard for me, and of protesting against the conduct of the Government in interfering with my liberty.

At length the Assizes came. I made my appearance in court at the time appointed, with more than thirty voluntary witnesses by my side, all prepared to testify, that in my lectures and public speeches I had uniformly advocated peaceful measures, and denounced everything in the shape of conspiracy, violence, or insurrection. I waited ten days for my trial, attending in court all the time. I watched the trials of other political prisoners, and was not a little discouraged to find that they were all convicted, and sentenced, generally, to lengthy terms of imprisonment. The charge against one of the prisoners was, that he had sold and circulated seditious publications. Copies of the works which he was charged with circulating were brought into court. What were my feelings when I found that the publications were my own *Companion to the Almanacs*, and my weekly periodical *The People*. These works were handed about the court, and placed in the hands of the judge. The man was convicted, and sentenced to two years' imprisonment. What chance was there now for me? My solicitor advised me to plead guilty, telling me I should thus get off with a lighter punishment; but I refused. Some *did* plead guilty, and *did* get off with lighter punishments than those who stood their trial; but I was determined to have a public trial, or else be honorably discharged.

It was alarming enough to see a man convicted for selling my publications: but something still more alarming happened the following day. A most unprincipled and lying witness was brought forward by the Attorney-General. During the trial of one of the Chartist leaders he swore that he had himself formed one of a band of conspirators in Manchester, who pledged themselves to burn the city, and who had prepared the most destructive combustibles to secure the success of their horrible plot. When asked to name the parties composing the meeting at which he said he had been present, he named me as one. I was horrified. I had never seen the man before in all my life, and the idea

Hosted by Google

that I should be a party to such a plot as he had described, was monstrous; but what was to hinder a prejudiced or a frightened jury from believing his testimony? Fortunately for me, the Judge asked him if he saw in court, and could point out, any of the persons he had named as parties to the conspiracy. I stood within two or three yards of him, and looked him full in the face. It was plain from the way in which his wandering eyes passed by me, that whatever other parties he might know, he did not know me. At length he pointed out a person that he said was present at the secret meeting. 'What is his name?' said the Judge. The fellow gave a name. It was not the right one. He pointed out another. 'What is his name?' said the Judge again. The fellow gave a name. He was wrong again. The court got out of patience with the villain, and the Judge ordered him into custody to await his trial on a charge of perjury. This was an unspeakable relief both to me and to my anxious wife and friends, who had witnessed the dreadful affair with the most intense anxiety and alarm.

Some time after this horrible exhibition of baseness, my solicitor came to me and told me that he had had an interview with the Attorney-General, and that he had authorized him to say, that if I would enter into bonds and give securities to keep the peace, he would not ask me to plead guilty, but set me at liberty without more to do. He even offered, at last, to accept my own recognizances to the small amount of fifty pounds, without any other security. I refused the offer. To give bonds to keep the peace seemed like an acknowledgment that I had attempted or threatened to break it; and I had done no such thing. My solicitor said the offer was a very generous one, and pressed me very earnestly to accept it: my counsel did the same; but without effect. A number of friends came round me and tried to remove my objections to the measure: but all was vain. I was sorry to go against their advice, but my feeling was, that to agree to the compromise proposed would be a sacrifice of principle, and would entail dishonor on me, and be followed by self-reproach and shame. At last, to obtain a little respite, and to get out of the way of my importunate friends for a time, I told my solicitor that I would lay the matter before my wife, and that whatever she might

Hosted by Google

advise, I would do. He agreed to this. He was satisfied that there was not a woman in the country that would not advise her husband to make a concession like that required of me, rather than see him run the risk of two or three years' imprisonment.

My wife was at Southport just then, some eighteen miles away, and it was too late for me to get to her that evening, so I had to spend the night alone in Liverpool. I went to bed, but found it impossible to sleep. My anxious mind kept turning over and over the proposal of the Attorney-General, and trying to find some good reason for accepting it; but all in vain. I had promised to be guided by my wife; but suppose she should counsel me to give the required security, could I do so and be happy? It seemed impossible. It struck twelve,—it struck one—two—three, and I was still unsettled. At last I said, 'I will explain my misgivings to my wife,—I will tell her that I feel as if I should never be happy to consent to the compromise, —that I cannot get rid of the feeling that it would be dishonorable. And I know she will never advise me to do anything that I regard as dishonorable.' As soon as I had fairly decided what to do, I fell asleep.

I was at Southport in the morning by the earliest conveyance, and laid the matter before my wife. 'Do nothing,' said she, 'that you regard as a sacrifice of principle, or an act of dishonor. Whatever you believe to be your duty, do it; I am willing to take the consequences.' I answered, 'I believe it my duty to insist on a trial, or on an honorable discharge.' 'Then insist on it,' said she. That was enough. I returned to Liverpool at once, and told my solicitor the result of my interview with my wife, and he communicated the intelligence to the Attorney-General. The Attorney-General was very much vexed, and, using an expression which we cannot with propriety repeat, declared that he would 'make me squeak.'

The result of my refusal was that the Attorney-General put off my case to the very last. On the eleventh day of the Assizes I was placed in the dock with a number of prisoners who had agreed to plead guilty, and enter into bonds. My name was called at length, and I refused either to plead guilty, or to be bound to keep the peace. 'Can

Hosted by Google

there be any man so foolish as not to accept the mercy of her Majesty?' said the Judge. My answer was, that I had committed no crime, and that it was justice that I wanted, and not mercy. 'I demand a trial,' said I, 'or an honorable discharge. I have been arrested on a charge of sedition and conspiracy, and held up before the world as a criminal, and I claim the right of justifying myself before the public, unless I am honorably discharged.' The Judge said I had no need to concern myself about the public,—that the public did not concern itself about me. I answered that the public *did* concern itself about me; and that I was right in concerning myself about the public. At this point my Counsel rose, and spoke of my character and position, with a view to justify my demand for a trial, or an honorable discharge. The Attorney-General then applied for a postponement of my trial to the following Assizes, alleging that I was the author of a seditious and blasphemous publication. I said the statement was false, and that the Attorney-General had no right to make such a charge against me, and added that to ask a postponement after I and my witnesses had been waiting there eleven days, was most unreasonable. The Judge then asked on what grounds a postponement was desired. When the Attorney-General stated his grounds, the Judge pronounced them insufficient. The Attorney-General then said he should enter a *nolle prosequi*. Some of my friends, when they heard this, were greatly alarmed. They supposed it to be a threat of something very terrible, and expected to see me carried away at once to prison. And some of the bystanders began to reproach me, and say I was rightly served for not accepting the generous offer of the Attorney-General. I, of course, knew that the Attorney-General's *nolle prosequi* meant that he would have nothing more to do with me, and that I was now free. While therefore my friends were fearing and trembling, I stood calm and comfortable. After a few moments the Judge said 'You are at liberty, and may retire.'

When my friends found that I was free, they were wild with delight, and flocked round me, eager to shake me by the hand, and give me their congratulations. They were now satisfied that in rejecting the proposal of the Attorney-

Hosted by Google

General, I had done no more than my duty. One gentleman, who had been bail for me, was extravagant enough to declare that I occupied the proudest position of any man in the country. 'You have withstood the tyranny of the Government,' said he, 'and have triumphed.' I hurried home as fast as I could with my happy wife and my exulting friends. When we got there the cannon were roaring and the bands playing. My workmen and neighbors had heard of my triumph, and were celebrating it in the noisest way they could. Then followed feasting and public congratulations, both at home and in distant parts of the country, and for a time I was quite a hero.

The interference of the authorities with my liberty, and the needless annoyances to which they had subjected me, had roused my indignation to a high pitch, and after my liberation, I wrote and spoke more violently against the Government than I had done before. At length the great excitement in which I had so long lived, and the excessive labors in which I had been so long engaged, exhausted my strength; my health began to fail; I thought my constitution was giving way, so I resolved on some change of position and occupation.

I had long suffered from dyspepsia. For twenty years I had spent so much nervous energy in mental work, that I had not sufficient left to digest my food. And I had suffered in consequence, not only from violent heart-burn, but from a more distressing pain at the pit of my stomach. I had continually, or almost continually, for months together, a feeling as if a red-hot bullet lay burning in my stomach, or as if some living creature was eating a hole through the bottom of it. I took medicine, but it gave me no relief. The disuse of intoxicating drinks had once cured me for a time,—cured me for some years in fact,—but the torturing, depressing sensation came again at last, and seemed more obstinate than ever.

In 1847, as I was leaving home one day in the train, I was seized with a pain of a much more dreadful description. It seemed as if it would burst my stomach, or tear it in pieces, and destroy my life at once. It continued for nearly an hour. It returned repeatedly, and remained sometimes for several hours. In some cases it tortured me all

Hosted by Google

night. Vomiting took it away, so I frequently took warm water to produce vomiting. I was advised to take more exercise in the open air, so I bought a gun and went out shooting. I purchased a horse and carriage too, and went out riding. These did me good. But I found that when I took certain kinds of food, such as rich cakes, rich pies, or rich puddings, the pain returned. So I began to deny myself of those luxuries. But even spare living seemed to lose its effect after a time, and first the gnawing, and then the stretching, tearing, rending pain returned.

In 1849, I took a voyage to America. Vast numbers of my readers wanted to emigrate to America, and they looked to me for information respecting the country. I had given them the best I could get, but they wanted more and better. They wanted me to visit the country, and give them the result of my observations and inquiries. I did so. To fit myself the better for giving them counsel, I crossed the ocean in a common emigrant sailing vessel, and saw how the poor creatures fared. We were nearly eight weeks on the water. For much of the time the winds were idle. They refused to blow. They might have struck for shorter hours or better pay. When they did blow, they blew with all their might, but almost always in the wrong direction; as if they regarded us as their enemies, and were bent on giving us all the annoyance they could. Many were sick; more were discontented; and all longed wearily for land. These eight weeks were the longest ones I ever lived. They looked like years. At length we got a sight of land, and rejoiced exceedingly. For myself, I had other feelings as well as joy, when I first got sight of the great New World of which I had heard, and read, and thought so much, and so long, and of which I had dreamt so often. For America had lived in my thoughts from my early days; and the first faint glimpse of her wooded shores thrilled my whole soul with unspeakable emotions.

We landed. I examined the emigrant boarding houses. I sought information about work and wages, and about means of transport to the West. I called on Horace Greeley and others, to whom I had letters of recommendation, who helped me to books about the West. I made my way through New York, and across Lake Erie to Cleveland. I

Hosted by Google

had three brothers who were settled in different parts of Ohio, and a number of old friends. I visited them. I explored Ohio. I went into Western Virginia, and examined some lands there that had been advertised for sale in England. I passed on to Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. I spent some days in Chicago. The city was awfully dull. The people were despondent. I almost think I could have bought the whole city for fifty thousand pounds. I had a farm offered me for seven dollars and a half an acre, on which now a great part of the city I suppose is built. I went to Milwaukie. There the people seemed more hopeful; though several were leaving for warmer climes. It was autumn, and I treated myself freely to the peaches and other rich fruits of the country. About the end of October I started for England, in one of the Cunard Steamers, crossing the ocean in nine days, about one-sixth of the time I spent in the voyage out.

I gave to my readers an account of all I had seen, and heard, and read, and thousands of them left the land of their birth in search of homes in the domains of the Great Republic. Some got home-sick, and cursed me. Some got profitable work, or promising farms, and blessed me. And I learned two lessons; first, that a man must not look to men for the reward of his beneficent services, but to God and a good conscience; and, second, that some will be miserable, and that some will be happy, go where they may:—that it is not the land they live in, but the dispositions they cherish, and the life they live, that makes their heaven or hell.

I had already made up my mind to settle in America myself, and early in 1851 I disposed of my business, and prepared to transport myself and my family to Central Ohio. I had suffered so long from pain, and weakness, and depression, and I was so utterly wearied with continual over-work, and so disgusted too with the government and institutions of the country, and with some of its inhabitants, that I felt it an infinite relief to be freed from all further care and concern about business, and in the first rush of my new wild joy, I took my gun and blew off part of the top of the chimney of my printing establishment. No child could be wilder in his delight, when escaping

Hosted by Google

from long confinement in a weary school, and starting for the longed-for society and pleasures of his home.

But preparing for a journey of four thousand miles, with wife and children, was itself work enough for a time. There were a hundred things to be bought, which you would need in your new and far off home. And there were a thousand things which you already had, to be packed, and as many more to be set aside, to be destroyed, or sold, or given away. And there were a thousand letters and papers to be examined, and a judgment formed, as to which should be preserved, and which should perish in the flames. And there were visits to be paid and repaid, and there were partings, and regrets, and tears. But all was over at length, and we were on our way to the world beyond the flood.

It was pleasant to get away from one's religious and political opponents, but painful to part with so many devoted friends, who had proved their affection for me and for my family by so many sacrifices, and their steadfastness in times of so much trial. But I had hopes of keeping up my intercourse with them through the Press, and of ministering to their gratification and improvement by sending them accounts of all I saw or learnt of an interesting character in the land to which I was going. I had also hopes that a quiet home, in a retired and peaceful part of a new country, might prove conducive to my own improvement and happiness.

One of the objects I had in view in going to America was to obtain a little quiet for calm reflection on the course I had so long been pursuing, and a sober consideration of the position which I had reached. I was not satisfied that the changes which had taken place in my views and way of life, since my separation from the Church and the ministry, had all been changes for the better. I had had suspicions for some time, that amidst the whirl of perpetual excitement in which I had lived, and the continual succession of angry contests in which I had been engaged, I had probably missed my way on some points, and I wished for a favorable opportunity of ascertaining whether these suspicions were well grounded or not.

But when I got to America I found myself in a condition less friendly to calm reflection and to a just and im-

Hosted by Google

partial review of my past history, than the one from which I had fled. The very day we landed in New York we fell in with the Hutchinson family. I had become acquainted with them in England, and had spent some time in their company, and had attended some of their concerts at Leeds. They were to sing that night in New York, and we attended the performance, and were delighted with their sweet wild music, and with their wisdom and their wit. They were all reformers of the radical school, and though their songs and conversation were not immoral or profane, they were advanced beyond the bounds of religion, into the neutral ground of Latitudinarianism.

When we got to Akron, Ohio, we found a Woman's Rights Convention in session; and there we got introduced to a number of advanced spirits, both male and female, and in their society became acquainted with quite a multitude of strange and lawless speculations, of which, till then, we had lived in happy or in woful ignorance. We reached at length the region where we were to make our home, and now other matters engrossed my mind. I had, in the first place, a farm to select, and then the purchase to make. I had then my goods to look after, my house to arrange, and my food to provide. Then work wanted doing on the farm—a hundred kinds of work, all new, and many of them hard and very perplexing. We wanted men to aid us; and men were not to be got; or, when got, were difficult to manage, and hard to please. And horses, and cows, and sheep, were wanted; and poultry, and pigs; and ploughs, and harrows, and wagons, and harness. And stoves and fuel were required. And the house had to be enlarged, and the barns rebuilt, and the gardens cultivated, and the orchard replanted. And a hundred lessons on farming had to be learnt, and a hundred more to be unlearnt. And we were always making mistakes, and sustaining losses. And our neighbors were not all that we could wish; and we were not all that they could wish. It was impossible to avoid impositions, and difficult to take injustice quietly; so we remonstrated, and resisted, and made things worse.

Before we had got ourselves fairly settled we began to be visited by a number of friends. And many of those

Hosted by Google

friends were wilder and more extravagant, in their views on religion and politics, than myself; and instead of helping me to quiet reflection, did much to render such a thing impossible. They were mostly Garrisonian Abolitionists, with whom I had become acquainted while in England, or through the medium of anti-slavery publications. Many of them had had an experience a good deal like my own. They had been members and ministers of churches, and had got into trouble in consequence of their reforming tendencies, and had at length been cast out, or obliged to withdraw. They had waged a long and bitter war against the churches and ministers of their land, and had become skeptics and unbelievers of a somewhat extravagant kind. Henry C. Wright was an Atheist. So were some others of the party. My own descent to skepticism was attributable in some measure to my intercourse with them, and to a perusal of their works, while in England. The first deadly blow was struck at my belief in the supernatural inspiration of the Scriptures by Henry C. Wright. It was in conversation with him too that my belief in the necessity of church organization was undermined, and that the way was smoothed to that state of utter lawlessness which so naturally tends to infidelity and all ungodliness. My respect for the talents of the abolitionists, and the interest I felt in the cause to which they had devoted their lives, and the sympathy arising from the similar way in which we had all been treated by the churches and priesthoods with which we had come in contact, disposed me, first, to regard their skeptical views with favor, and then to accept them as true.

And now they welcomed me to their native land, and embraced the earliest opportunity of visiting me in my new home. And all that passed between us tended to confirm us in our common unbelief. I afterwards found that in some of the abolitionists, in nearly all, I fear, anti-christian views had led to immoral habits, which rendered their antipathy to Christianity all the more bitter. In almost all of them infidelity had produced a lawlessness of speculation on moral matters, which could hardly fail to produce in the end, if it had not already produced, great licentiousness of life.

I had no sooner got things comfortably fixed at home,

Hosted by Google

than I received an invitation from the American Anti-slavery Society, to attend their Annual Meeting, which was to be held in Rochester, New York. I went, and there I met with S. S. Foster, Abby Kelly Foster, Parker Pillsbury, C. L. Remond, Henry C. Wright, Wendell Phillips, W. L. Garrison, Lucy Stone, Lucretia and Lydia Mott, and a number of other leading Abolitionists. Here too I met with Frederick Douglas, the celebrated fugitive slave, who had settled in Rochester, and was publishing his paper there. Some of the Anti-Slavery Leaders I had seen before in England, and had had the pleasure of having them as my guests, and of enjoying their conversation. Henry C. Wright, W. L. Garrison, Frederick Douglas, and C. L. Remond, were old acquaintances. The rest I knew only by report: but I had read the story of their labors and sufferings in behalf of the negro slave, and had longed for years to make their acquaintance. They were, in my estimation, among the best and bravest of their race. I had read of them a thousand times with the greatest interest, and a thousand times I had wished for the honor of co-operating with them in their generous labors. And now I was in their midst, on American soil. And all seemed glad to make my acquaintance, and eager to testify their regard for me, and to welcome me to a share in their benevolent labors. I was soon at home with them all, for they were a free and hearty people. I attended both their public and their private meetings. The anniversary lasted several days, and the time was one continued Festival. There were people from almost every part of the country, and the house of every Anti-Slavery person in the city was placed at the service of the visitors. They were as one family, and had all things in common. The public meetings were largely attended, and the audiences seemed favorably impressed. In the intervals I visited the Falls on the Genesee River. More beautiful and enchanting scenes I never beheld. In all but terrible grandeur they equal, if they do not surpass, the Falls of Niagara.

And there was an infinite abundance of strange and exciting conversation in many of the circles, not only on Slavery, but on the Bible and Religion, on the Church and the Priesthood, and on Woman's Rights, and the Bloomer

Hosted by Google

Costume, and Marriage Laws, and Free-love, and Education, and Solomon's Rod, and Non-resistance, and Human Government, and Communism, and Individualism, and Unitarianism, and Theodore Parkerism, and Spiritualism, and Vegetarianism, and Teetotalism, and Deism, and Atheism, and Clairvoyance, and Andrew Jackson Davis, and the American Congress, and Quakerism, and William Henry Channing, and his journey to England, and Free-soil, and the Public Lands, and the Common Right to the Soil, and Rent, and Interest, and Capital, and Labor, and Fourierism, and Congeniality of Spirit, and Natural Affinities, and Domestic Difficulties, and—the Good time Coming. All were full of reform, and most were wild and fanatical. Some regarded marriage as unnatural, and pleaded for Free-love as the law of life. Some were for Communism, but differed as to the form which it ought to assume. One contended that all should be perfectly free,—that each should be a law unto himself, and should work, and rest, and eat, and drink, as his own free spirit should prompt him. Another said that the principle had been tried, and had failed,—that some were anxious to do all the eating, and sleeping, and loving, and left others to do all the working. Joseph Treat was there, advocating Atheism, and defending the right of men and women, married or single, to give free play to native tendencies and sexual affinities. But Treat was indifferently clad, and not well washed, and he was evidently no great favorite. * * * Most were in favor of non-resistance, and full individual freedom. To acknowledge the right of human government and of human laws, was treason to humanity. Man is a law to himself. He is his own governor. The Protestant principle of the right of private judgment and liberty of conscience strikes at the root of all the governments on earth. Each one's nature is his own sole law. The one principle of duty is, for every one to do that which is right in his own eyes. The principle of the Anti-Slavery Society means that, and neither more nor less. And the Anti-Slavery Society will, after emancipating the negro, destroy all the governments, remodel all the laws and institutions, and emancipate all the nations of the earth. Of course the laws of marriage will fall to the ground. Why not?

Hosted by Google

They originated only with men,—with men who lived in darker times, and who were less developed, than we. It would be strange if children could make laws fit to govern men. And with the laws of marriage will go the laws of property in land. Land was common property at first, and what right had any one to make it private? The first man who appropriated land was a thief. And those who inherited it from him were receivers of stolen goods. And the title that was vicious at first could never be made valid by time. The continuance of a wrong can never make it right. Allow that men have a right to the land in consequence of long possession and inheritance, and you must allow that men may have a right to their slaves. The right to land, and the right to slaves, are not so different as some would suppose. What is man's right to his own body worth, if he is deprived of his right to the land? Man lives from the land, and unless he has a right to the land, he can have no right to life. A right to life implies a right to the land. Men live *on* the land as well as *from* it; and if they have not a right to the land, they can have no right to live. And man has a right to perfect freedom. Life without freedom is slavery; and slavery is the extinction of all rights, the right to life included. And woman has equal rights with man. And children have equal rights with either. The idea that human beings have no rights till they are twenty-one, is monstrous. What mighty change is it that takes place at the moment a person reaches the age of twenty-one, that he should be a slave a moment before, and a free man a moment after? No change at all takes place. The rights of a human being are the gift of Nature, and not the gift of the law. Who authorized men to make laws for one another? In making men different from each other, Nature has made it impossible for one man to legislate wisely for another. The majority have a right to rule themselves, but they have no right to rule the minority. All rights are the rights of individuals, and the rights of individuals composing a minority, are the same as the rights of individuals composing a majority. A man may elect a representative; but he cannot be bound by a representative elected by others. Children should be educated, not by force or authority, but by attraction. The

Hosted by Google

assumption of authority over a child by a parent is usurpation; the use of authority over a child is tyranny. The individuality of a child is its life, and life is sacred. To destroy individuality is murder. We have no right to take Nature's place, and make a human being something different from what she has formed him. Solomon's rod and Paul's authority are alike immoral. All should be governed by their attractions, like the orbs of heaven, and the constituents of the earth. The law of Nature is one, both for living men and dead matter. Our sympathies and affinities are our only rulers. They are ourselves,—our best selves,—and to allow either law or ruler to interfere with them, is self-destruction. We are no longer ourselves when we allow ourselves to be controlled by the will or power of another. Animals have equal rights with man. The poet was right when he said,

> "Take not away the life thou canst not give,
> For all things have an equal right to live."

How *can* man have a right to take away the life of an animal? The lower animals occupied the world before man, and man, a later comer, could not abrogate the prior rights of his predecessors. The use of animal food is unnatural. It is unhealthy. In feeding on other living creatures man degrades, corrupts, and then destroys himself. And vegetables, grains, and fruits should be taken in their natural state. The art of cooking is an unnatural innovation. The first of our race did not cook. Man is the only cooking animal, and he is the only sickly one. He is the only one that loses his teeth, or suffers from indigestion. Teetotalism is binding on all. Alcohol is an unnatural product. Man is the only being unnatural enough to drink it. Grapes are good, and so is grain; but wine, and beer, and spirits, are a trinity of devils, which destroy the bodies and torment the souls of unnatural men. "There is no God," said one. "Gods and devils are alike fantastic creatures of the erring mind of man." "But there *must* be a God," said another. "All nature cries aloud there is a God. Our own hearts' instincts —our highest intuitions,—assure us there is. As well deny

Hosted by Google

the universe, and the primal intuitions of humanity, as the being of God. A God and a future life are necessities of human nature. And there is, *without* us, a supply for every want *within* us. As soon will you find a race of beings with appetites for food, for whom no food is provided, as a race with longings for God and desires for immortality, while no God and immortality exist to meet those longings, to satisfy those desires." "But if there be a God to answer to our longings, and a blessed immortality to satisfy our desires, why not a devil to answer to our fears, and a hell to answer to our guilty terrors? And would a God leave us without a revelation of his will." "The instincts of our nature are the revelation of God's will. To obey our instincts is to obey the law of God." "Then is the law of God as various as men's natural tendencies? Does the murderer, whose tendency is to kill, obey the law of God, as well as the victim who struggles to escape his doom? And does the eagle obey the law of God in pouncing on the dove, and the dove in seeking to evade its talons? Is every tendency the law of God? If it be the will of God that the powerful tendencies of some should neutralize the feebler tendencies of others, is not might, right? And if might be right, why murmur at anything that is? For everything that is, exists by virtue of its might: and every thing that perishes, perishes in virtue of its weakness. Are you not sanctioning the doctrine of the Optimist, and saying with Pope,

> "In spite of sense, in erring reason's spite,
> One truth is clear—whatever *is*, is RIGHT."

"Whatever is, *is* right," says another. "It is the result of eternal wisdom, of almighty power, and infinite love. God is all perfect, and He is all in all. A perfect God could have nothing short of a perfect object in all His works, a perfect motive prompting Him, a perfect rule to guide Him; and, as the author of all existence, a perfect material out of which to make the creatures of His love. All is perfect. It is men's own imperfection that makes them think otherwise." "All is perfect," you say, "yet man is *imperfect;* and his imperfection makes him think other things imperfect.

Hosted by Google

All is perfect, yet something is imperfect; and that something is the most perfect or the least imperfect creature in existence." "Imperfection itself is a part of perfection," says the Optimist. "As discords are necessary to the highest musical compositions; so imperfection is necessary to the highest perfection."

"The most difficult point of all," says a philosophical Unitarian, "is that of necessity. Every thing must have a cause. Man's actions are the result of physical causes; yet man is consciously free." "Man is no more free than the planets," says an Atheist. "He *acts* freely, as the planets do,—that is, he acts in harmony with his tendencies,—in harmony with the causes of his actions,—the causes of his actions cause them by causing him to will them, by inclining him to do them; and the causes of planetary action produce that action in the same way: but the freedom and the necessity are the same in the one case as in the other. All is free, and all is bound. The chain is infinite, eternal, and almighty. The difference between man and a planet is, that man is conscious of his acts, and the planet is not." "Then duty is a dream," said a third, "and conscience a delusion; and responsibility a fiction; and virtue and vice are alike unworthy of either praise or blame, reward or punishment." "A tree is not responsible," said the Necessitarian, "yet we cut it down, if it bears no fruit; and we cut off the natural branches, and insert new scions, if its fruit is not to our liking. A musquito is irresponsible, yet we kill it when it gives us pain. A horse is irresponsible, yet we caress it when it gives us pleasure." "So man is no more than a tree, a musquito, or a horse! And selfishness is the measure of our duty! We caress or kill as we are pleased or pained." And so the conversation ran on in one party.

In another the Bible is the subject of conversation. But here all are agreed on the principal point. No one regards it as of supernatural origin, or of Divine authority. The question is, whether the Anti-Slavery Society shall acknowledge that the clergy are right in saying that the Bible sanctions Slavery. "That it does sanction Slavery is certain," says one. "Abraham was a slave-holder, a slave-trader, and a slave-breeder. Isaac inherited his slave property.

Hosted by Google

Jacob had slaves, and had offspring by two of them. Moses allows the Jews to buy up the nations round about them, and to hold them as slaves, as a *possession*, and to transmit them as an inheritance to their children for ever. The Decalogue recognizes slaves as property. Jesus never condemns slave-holding, and Paul returns a fugitive to his master. Take the clergy at their word. Acknowledge that their sacred book does sanction Slavery. Acknowledge that it allows a master to flog his slave to death, on the ground that the slave is his money. Acknowledge too that it allows the slave-holder to make his female slaves his concubines. Acknowledge every thing. Take the preachers' side in the matter, and you will shock the preachers, and you will shock the public, and cause them to give up the defence of Slavery." "The slave-holders are not governed by the Bible," says another. "Their appeal to it is only a pretence,—an *argumentum ad hominem*. They favor Slavery because it is profitable, and because they like it. Make it unprofitable, and they will soon find a different interpretation for the Bible." "Show that the Bible is no authority,—that it is merely a human book,—and you take away their argument for Slavery," said one. "Their argument is force," said another, "and you will never abolish Slavery till you take up arms and crush the tyrants." "But the Bible is the question," says a third. "Call a Convention to discuss the Bible," said I, and the Convention was accordingly called.

And thus the conversation ran in private circles, during the intervals of the public meetings.

I had supposed, that as the people of America had got a Democratic form of government, no further reforms were necessary, except the Abolition of Slavery. I now found however that there were more Reformers, and a greater variety of Reformers, in the circle into which I had fallen, than in England. There was nothing right,—nothing as it ought to be. The family, the church, the school, the government, religion, morals, and even nature were all wrong. The world was full of prejudice. We were heirs of all the mistakes of our forefathers for a thousand generations. "Every thing wants destroying," said one, "that every thing may be created anew." The oracle

Hosted by Google

of the universe cries, "Behold, I make all things new;" and that oracle we ought to echo; and on that oracle we ought to act. 'When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.' Such was the language of the great Reformer of antiquity. The human race should adopt the same language, and follow the great example. The race should say, 'When *I* was a child, *I* thought as a child, *I* spoke as a child, *I* understood as a child; but now, having become a man, *I* will put away childish things.' I will put away my childish thoughts on religion, on science, on morals, on government, on education, on marriage, on slavery, on war, on every thing. The fact that they are old, is a proof they are wrong. The clothes which fit a child *cannot* fit a man. The notions, the institutions, the laws, which were good for the world's infancy, cannot be good for its manhood." "And they *shall* be put away, so far as I am concerned," said a lady. "And they shall be put away, so far as I am concerned," answered another. "Ye are born again," says a third. "That noble declaration proves you new creatures. Old things are passed away; behold, all things *are* become new."

A thousand wild sentiments were uttered; a thousand extravagant things were said; and many unwise things were done. It was plain that a license of thought was preparing the way, had already prepared the way, for a license of deed. This license produced a fearful amount of mischief before long. It had produced no little then. Many a domestic schism,—many a disgraceful alliance,—many a broken heart,—were the result of those lawless, wanton speculations.

And some came to see their folly and repented in part. Lucy Stone declared she would never marry according to law; but she married according to law in the end, contenting herself with recording a vain and foolish protest. Harriet K. Hunt would never pay any more taxes till she was allowed to vote, and was eligible to the Presidency of the United States. Whether she has paid her tax or not we do not know; but she has not yet got a vote, and is certainly not yet the President of the United States. Mrs. C.

Hosted by Google

L. made a declaration, the publication of which covered her hard-working and excellent husband with shame; but she too has since seen her error, and endeavored to make all things right.

It was rather amusing, but somewhat startling,—it was very bewildering, yet very instructive,—to listen to all the projects and theories of a multitude of thoughtful people, suddenly emancipated from religion and moral obligation, and from law and custom, and to speculate on what might be the result of so much extravagance. It put humanity before one in a new light. It was a new revelation. And all those people were educated up to the American standard. And they were all in tolerable circumstances. Some were rich, and most were owners of the lands on which they lived. Several of them had been ministers of the Gospel. Many of them were authors. And their appearance and manners were often equal to those of the best. And some of them could hardly be excelled as public speakers. Some of the lady speakers were the best I ever heard. After mingling in such society, and witnessing such a strange breaking up of "the fountains of the great deep" of thought, and fancy, and animal passion, it is hard to say what might not take place in the world, if the spirit of infidel reform which is pervading the nations should become general.

I returned to my home neither a better nor a wiser man. But I was full of thought. I had been afraid that in the excitement of controversy, and under the smart of persecution, I had gone too far. But here were people who had gone immeasurably farther. I was afraid I had been too rash. But here were pleasant looking and educated people, compared with whom I was the perfection of sobriety. And the sense of my comparative moderation quieted my fears, prevented salutary investigation, and prepared me to go still farther in the way of doubt. New books were placed in my hands, all favorable to anti-christian views. I got new friends and acquaintances, and all were of the doubting, unbelieving class. Several of them were atheists, and insinuated doubts with regard to the foundation of all religious belief. Till my settlement in America I had continued to believe, not only in God, and

Hosted by Google

providence, and prayer, but in immortality; and to look on Atheism as the extreme of folly. But now my faith in those doctrines began to be shaken. Instead of drawing back from the gulf of utter unbelief, and retracing my steps toward Christ, as I had partly hoped, I got farther astray; and though I did not plunge headlong into Atheism, I came near to the dreadful abyss, and was not a little bewildered with the horrible mists that floated round its brink.

Thus my hopes of calm and quiet thought, and of a sober reconsideration of the steps I had taken in the path of doubt and unbelief, were all, alas! exploded, and the last state of my soul was worse than the first.

To make things worse, I got into trouble with my Christian neighbors. My alienation from Christ had already produced in me a deterioration of character. I was not exactly aware of it at the time, and if I had been told of it, I might not have been able to believe it; but such was really the case. The matter is clear to me now past doubt. I had become less courteous, less conciliatory, less agreeable. I had discarded, to some extent, the Christian doctrines of meekness and humility. My temper had suffered. I was sooner provoked, and was less forgiving. I was more prompt in asserting my rights, and more prone perhaps to regard as rights what were no such things. And I made myself enemies in consequence, and got into unhappy disputes and painful excitements.

I imagined, I suppose, while in England, that the disturbers of my peace were all outside me, and that when I went to America I should leave them all behind; but I see now that many of them were within me, and that I carried them with me over the sea, to my far-off Western home. And they gave me as much trouble in my new abode as they had given me in my old one. It is the state of our minds that determines the measure of our bliss. As Burns says,

"If happiness have not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great,
But never can be blest.

Hosted by Google

No treasures, nor pleasures,
Can make us happy long;
The *heart* ay's the part ay
That makes us right or wrong."

And my heart was out of tune, and tended to put everything around me out of tune.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STORY OF MY DESCENT FROM THE FAITH OF MY CHILDHOOD, TO DOUBT AND UNBELIEF.

My parents were Methodists of the strictest kind, and they did their utmost to make their children Methodists. And they were very successful. They had eleven children, ten of which became members of the Methodist Society before they were twenty years of age; and even the odd one did not escape the influence of religion altogether.

I was a believer in God and Christ, in duty and immortality, from my earliest days. And my faith was strong. Things spiritual were as real to me as things natural. Things seen and things unseen, things temporal and things eternal, formed one great whole,—one solemn and boundless universe. I lived and breathed in a spiritual world.

My parents were rigorously consistent. They were true Christians. They not only talked, but looked and lived as persons who felt themselves in the presence of a great and holy God, and in the face of an awful eternity; and the influence of their godly life, and daily prayers, and solemn counsels fell on me with a power that was irresistible.

If the doctrine taught me in my early days had been the doctrine of Christ, and the doctrine of Christ alone, in a form adapted to my youthful mind, the probability is, that I should have grown up to manhood, and passed through life a happy, useful and consistent Christian. But I was taught other doctrines. Though my father and mother taught me little but what was Christian, doctrines were

Hosted by Google

taught me by others that shocked both my reason and my sense of right. I was taught, among other things, that in consequence of the sin of Adam, God had caused me to come into the world utterly depraved, and incapable, till I was made over again, of thinking one good thought, of speaking one good word, or of doing one good deed. I felt that I did think good thoughts, and that I had good feelings, and that I both said and did good things. But this I was told was a great delusion:—that nothing was good, and that nothing was pleasing to God, unless it came from faith in Christ. But I *had* faith in Christ. I believed in Him with all my heart. I had believed in Him from the first. The answer was that I had believed with a *common* kind of faith, but that it was another kind of faith that was necessary to salvation, and that whatsoever did not spring from this other kind of faith, was sin. And I was given to understand, that if I thought otherwise, it was because of the naughtiness of my heart, which, I was told, was deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. What this other kind of faith was, I did not know, and could not learn. I was then told that the natural man could not understand the things of the Spirit, and that before I could understand them, I must experience a change from nature to grace; all of which was past my comprehension. I was then informed that I must wait till God revealed those things unto me by His Spirit. But this made the matter no plainer.

I was further taught, that I was, in some way, answerable for Adam's sin,—that God made Adam the federal head of all mankind, and that all were bound by what he did;—that if he had done right, all would have come into the world pure, and good, and happy, and sure of eternal life; but that through his sin, we were all born, not only utterly depraved, but guilty and liable to eternal damnation.

Then followed strange things about satisfaction to offended justice, trust in Christ's merits and righteousness, justification, regeneration, and sanctification, all mysteries as dark to me as night.

Some time after, I found in my Catechism the doctrine of God's absolute and infinite fore-knowledge,—the doc-

Hosted by Google

trine that from eternity God knew who should be saved and who should be lost. This gave me the most terrible shock of all. It was plain that my doom was fixed forever. For if it was certainly foreknown, it must be unchangeably fixed.

These dreadful doctrines filled me with horror. They all but drove me mad. For a time, when I was about eight or nine years old, they *did* drive me mad. They were more than my nature could bear. I felt that if things were as these doctrines represented them to be, the ways of God were horribly unjust. And as I could do no other than believe the doctrines, my whole soul rose in rebellion against God. I supposed, as a matter of course, that I should be sent to hell for my rebelliousness; still I rebelled. It seemed a dreadful thing that God should hang one's eternal destiny on things that were not in one's own power. I thought that if people could not do all that God required of them, He ought to allow them to fall back into their original nothingness. My mind especially revolted against the arrangement which God was said to have made with Adam, and the terrible consequences entailed thereby on his posterity. To bring men into being, and force them to live on forever, and at the same time to hang their eternal destiny on another, or on something beyond their power, seemed dreadfully unjust. I felt that every man ought to be allowed a fair trial for himself, and to stand or fall by his own doings. And nothing could make me feel that I was really answerable for the sin of Adam, any more than that Adam was answerable for my sins. And how God could impute one man's sin to another, was past all comprehension. And I felt, that if matters were managed as they were represented to be, the government of the universe was not right.

But supposing that God had a right to do as He pleased, and not knowing that He was so good that it was impossible that He should ever please to do wrong, I suffered in silence. But I often said to myself, 'God does not deal fairly with mankind,' and my feelings towards Him were anything but those of love and gratitude. So far was I from feeling any obligation to Him, that I looked on my existence as a tremendous curse, and I would gladly have

Hosted by Google

consented to undergo any amount of torment, for any length of time short of eternity, for the privilege of being allowed to return to my original nothingness. The thought that even this was too much to be hoped for,—that it was fixed unchangeably that I must live on forever, and that there was but one dark path, which I might never be able to find, by which I could escape the unbounded and unending torments of hell, darkened all the days of my early youth, and made me exceedingly miserable. Some kind of blind unbelief, or a partial spiritual slumber at length came over me, and made it possible for me to live. But even then my life was anything but a happy one.

I cannot give the story of my life at length ; but I afterwards got over the difficulties of my early creed, or exchanged the blasphemous horrors of theology for the teachings of Christ, and became a cheerful, joyous Christian, and a happy and successful Christian minister.

As I have said in Chapter fourteenth, I regarded the Bible as the Word of God from my early childhood. I believed every word to be true, and every command to be binding. My faith, at first, rested on the testimony of my parents and teachers, and of those among whom I lived. Every one I heard speak of the Book, spoke of it as divine, and the thought that it might be otherwise did not, that I remember, ever enter my mind. This my hereditary faith in the Bible was strengthened by the instinctive tendencies of my mind to believe in God, and in all the great doctrines which the book inculcated.

The first attempt to *prove* the divinity of the Bible, of which I have any recollection, was made by my mother, while I was yet a child. What *led* her to make the attempt I do not remember. It might be some perplexing question that I had asked her; for I used to propose to her puzzling questions sometimes. Her argument was,—'Bad men *could* not write such a book, and good men *would* not. It must therefore, have been written by God.' Another argument that I remember to have heard in those days was,—' No man would write the Bible who did not know it to be true; because it tells liars that their portion will be in the lake of fire and brimstone.' There was also an impression among such people as my parents, that the Bible was so

Hosted by Google

good a book, and that it wrought with such a blessed power upon their souls, that it was impossible it should be written by any one but God. The last had probably the greatest effect upon their minds. Then they found in the Bible so many things in harmony with their best affections, their moral instincts, and their religious feelings, that they felt as if they had proof of its heavenly origin in their own souls. I came, at one period of my life, to look on these arguments with contempt. And it is certain, that to give them much force with men of logical habits, they would require qualification, and considerable illustration. But they are none of them so foolish as I once supposed. As for the last two, they are, when presented in a proper way, unanswerable.

There was another argument that was sometimes used, namely,—that though the different portions of the Bible were written by persons of widely distant ages, of different occupations and ranks, and of very different degrees of culture, they all aim at one end, all bear one way, and all tend to make men good and happy to the last degree. This is a great fact, and when properly considered, may well be accepted as a proof that the Bible, as a whole, is from God.

What effect these arguments had on my mind in my early days, I do not exactly remember, but the probability is, that they helped to strengthen my instinctive and hereditary faith in the divine origin of the Bible.

This my instinctive and hereditary faith was a great and beneficent power, and would have proved an inestimable blessing, if it had been preserved unshaken through life. And I am sorry it was not. I have no sympathy with those who speak of doubt as a blessing, and who recommend people to demolish their first belief, that they may raise a better structure in its place. We do not destroy our first and lower life, to prepare the way for a higher spiritual life. Nor do we kill the body to secure the development of the soul. Nor do we extinguish our natural home affections, in order to kindle the fires of friendship, patriotism, and philanthropy. The higher life grows out of the lower. The lower nourishes and sustains the higher. At first we are little more than vegetables: then we become animals: then men; and last of all, sages, saints, and

Hosted by Google

angels. But the vegetable nature lives through all, and is the basis and strength of the animal; and the animal nature lives, and is the basis and strength of the human; and the human lives, and is the basis and strength of the spiritual and divine. And the higher forms of life are all the more perfect, for the vigor and fulness of those by which they are preceded.

And so with faith. Instinctive faith is the proper basis for the faith that comes from testimony. And the faith which rests on testimony is the proper basis for that which comes from reason, investigation, experience, and knowledge. And in no case ought the first to be demolished to make way for the second, or the second discarded to make way for the third. To kill a tree in order to graft on it new scions, would be madness; and to kill, or discard, or in any way to slight or injure our first instinctive child-like faith, to graft on our souls a higher one, would be equal madness.

Our instincts are infallible. The faith to which they constrain us is always substantially right and true, and no testimony, no reasonings, no philosophy, ought to be allowed to set it aside. Testimony, and science, and experience, may be allowed to develop it, enlighten it, and modify it, but not to displace or destroy it. It is a divine inspiration, and is essential to the life and vigor of the soul, to the beauty and perfection of the character, and to the fulness and enjoyment of life. If you lose it, you will have to find it again, or be wretched. If you kill it, you will have to bring it to life again, or perish. It is a necessary support of all other faith, and a needful part of all religion, of all virtue, and of all philosophy. Skeptics may call it prejudice; but it is a kind of prejudice which, as Burke very truly says, is wiser than all our reasonings.

I did not fall out with my instinctive belief, though I did not know its value; but I was so formed, that I longed for proofs or corroborations of its truth. I wanted to be able to do something more, when questioned by doubters or unbelievers as to the grounds of my faith, than to say, 'I *feel* that it is true;' or to refer to the testimony of my parents and teachers; and I did not rest till I could do so.

I had a dear, good friend, Mr. Hill, a schoolmaster, a

Hosted by Google

local preacher, and a scholar, who, believing that I had talents to fit me for a travelling preacher, and desiring to prepare me for that high office, kindly undertook to aid me in my studies. After he had taught me something of English grammar, he began to teach me Latin. When he had got me through the elementary books, and exercised me well in one of the Roman historians, he lent me a copy of Grotius, on the truth of the Christian religion, and recommended me to translate it into English, and then to translate it back again into Latin. 'It contains the best arguments,' said he, 'in favor of Christianity, and it is written in pure and elegant Latin; and by the course I recommend, you will both improve yourself greatly in Latin, and obtain a large amount of useful religious knowledge.'

I did as I was bid, and the result was truly delightful. I found in the book proofs both of the existence of God, and of the truth of Christianity, which seemed to me most decisive. When I had got through the book, I felt as if I could convince the whole infidel world. By translating the work first into English and then back into Latin, and repeating my translations to my teacher without manuscript, I got the whole book, with all its train of reasoning, so fixed in mind, that I was able to produce the arguments whenever I found it necessary. I could, in fact, repeat almost the whole work from beginning to end.

I can hardly describe the pleasure I felt when I found that my faith had a solid foundation to rest upon,—that after having believed instinctively, and on the testimony of my parents and teachers, I could both justify my faith to my own mind, and give sound reasons for it to any who might question me on the subject.

I afterwards got Watson's Theological Institutes, which amplified some of the arguments of Grotius, and added fresh ones. Here too I found large quotations from Howe's LIVING TEMPLE, an argument for the existence of God drawn from the wonderful structure of the human body, and considerable portions of Paley's work on NATURAL THEOLOGY. About the same time I read the Lectures of Doddridge, which gave me a more comprehensive view than either Grotius or Watson, both of the evidences of the existence of God, and those of the truth of Christianity.

Hosted by Google

I afterwards met with Dwight's Theology, in which I found a number of things which interested me, though some of his reasonings seemed mere metaphysical fallacies.

I next read Adam Clarke's Commentary, where I found, besides his arguments for the existence of God, abundance of quotations from Paley, Lardner, Michælis, and others, on the credibility of the New Testament history, and the truth of Christianity. His *a priori* argument for the existence of God seemed only a play on words. His other arguments were much the same as Watson's.

About this time I read Mosheim's History of the Church. This did me harm. It is a bad book. It is, in truth, no real history of the Church at all, but a miserable chronicle of the heresies, inconsistencies and crimes of the worldly and priestly party in the Church, who perverted the religion of Christ to worldly, selfish purposes. The whole tendency of the book is to put the sweet image of Christ and the glories of His religion, out of sight, and to present to you in their place, a distressing picture of human weakness and human wickedness. It is a great pity that this wretched pretence to a church history was not long ago displaced by a work calculated to do some justice, and to render some service, to the cause of Christ.

I afterwards read works in favor of Christianity and against infidelity, by Robert Hall, Olinthus Gregory, Dr. Chalmers, Le Clerc, Hartwell Horne, S. Thompson, Bishop Watson, Bishop Pearson, Bishop Porteus. I also read Leland's View of Deistical Writers, Leslie's Short and Easy Method with Deists, Faber's Difficulties of Infidelity, Fuller's Gospel its Own Witness, Butler's Analogy, Baxter's Unreasonableness of Infidelity, and his Evidences of Christianity, Simpson's Plea for Religion and the Sacred Writings, Ryan on the Beneficial Effects of Christianity, Cave on the Early Christians, the Debate between R. Owen and A. Campbell, Scotch Lectures, G. Campbell on Miracles, Ray's Wisdom of God in Creation, Constable's History of Converts from Infidelity, Newton on the Prophecies, Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity, Nelson on the Cause and Cure of Infidelity, Priestley's Institutes of Natural and Revealed Religion, Jews' Letters to Voltaire, and works by Beattie, Soame Jenyns, West,

Hosted by Google

Lyttleton, Ogilvie, Addison, Gilbert Wakefield and others. I also read sermons on different branches of the evidences, by Tillotson, Barrow, and others. One of the last and one of the best works I read on the Evidences of Christianity, were some sermons by Dr. Channing. These sermons presented the historical argument in a simpler and more impressive form than any work I had ever read.

This reading of works on the evidences did not prove an unmixed blessing. I am not certain that it did not prove a serious injury.

1. In the first place, the works I read weakened, in time, and then destroyed, my instinctive and hereditary faith, and gave me nothing so satisfactory in its place. They filled my mind with thoughts of things outside me, and even outside Christianity itself, which did not take a firm and lasting hold of my affections. They seemed to take me from solid ground and living realities, into regions of cold, thin air, and bewildering mists and clouds.

2. In the second place, the writers disagreed among themselves. They differed as to the value of different kinds of evidence. Some were all for external evidences, and some were all for internal evidences. Some said there was no such thing as internal evidence. 'The very idea of such a thing,' said they, 'supposes that man is able to judge what doctrines are true, or rational, or worthy of God; and what precepts, laws, institutions, and examples are right and good; and man has no such power. Reason has no right to judge revelation. All that reason has a right to do is to judge as to the matter of fact whether the Bible and Christianity be really a revelation from God or not, and, if it be, what is its purport. As to the reasonableness of the doctrines, and the goodness of the precepts, reason has no right or power to judge at all.'

Others contended that miracles could never prove the truth or divinity of any system of doctrines or morals that did not commend itself to the judgments and consciences of enlightened, candid, and virtuous men. These two parties, between them, condemned both kinds of evidence.

3. Then thirdly; some used unsound arguments. They used arguments founded on mistakes with regard to matters of fact. Grotius, for instance, based two of his argu-

Hosted by Google

ments for the existence of God on misconceptions of this kind. 'That there is a God,' said Grotius, 'is evident from the fact, that water, which naturally runs downward to the level of the sea, is made to run upwards through subterranean channels, from the sea to the tops of the mountains, and thus supply springs and streams to water the earth, and supply the wants of its inhabitants.' But the waters are *not* forced upwards from the sea to the mountains in this way: they are carried to the hills in the form of vapors.

True, the evidence for the existence of God supplied by the conversion of water into vapor, and by the many beneficent ends answered thereby, is as real and as convincing a proof of God's existence as any evidence that could have been furnished by such an arrangement as that imagined by Grotius. But I did not see this at the time; hence the discovery that the argument of Grotius was unsound, had an unfavorable effect on my mind.

'Again,' says Grotius, 'it is plain that the world must have had a beginning, from the existence of mountains. For if the earth had existed from eternity, the mountains, which the rains and floods are always reducing, washing down particles into the valleys and plains, would long ago have disappeared, and every part of the earth would long before this have been quite level.' Here was another error. Grotius was not aware, it would seem, that there are forces continually at work in the interior of the earth making *new* mountains,—that some portions of the earth are continually rising, and others gradually subsiding.

4. Several of the arguments which I met with in Doddridge's great work I found to be unsound. And there were others which, if I did not discover to be fallacious, I felt to be unsatisfactory. They were, in truth, as I afterwards found, mere metaphysical puzzles.

5. Among the most honest and earnest works on the evidences that came in my way, were those of Richard Baxter. But many of his arguments were unsatisfactory. Among other things of doubtful value, he gave a number of ghost stories, and accounts of witches and their doings, and of persons possessed by evil spirits, and even of men and women who had sold themselves to the devil, and who had been seized and carried away by him bodily, in the

Hosted by Google

presence of their neighbors and friends. Then some of his arguments took for granted points of importance which I was particularly anxious to have proved. Much of his reasoning seemed conclusive enough, but when sound and unsound arguments are so blended in the same book, the unsound ones seem to lessen the credit and the force of the sound ones.

On the subject of the evidences, Baxter, like Grotius, was behind the times. His works might be satisfactory enongh to people of his own day, but they were not adapted to the minds of people of the present day.

6. The works of Paley and Butler gave me the greatest satisfaction. Paley, both in his Natural Theology and in his evidences of Christianity, seemed to be almost all that I could desire, and I rested in him for a length of time with great satisfaction. But I read him only once, and I ought, for a time at least, to have made him my daily study, and imprinted his work on my mind, as I did the work of Grotius.

7. Many writers on the Bible attempted to settle points which could not be settled. They tried to make out the authors of all the books in the Bible, and this was found impossible. Different writers ascribed books to different authors. The Book of Job was ascribed by one writer to Job himself, by another to Moses, and by a third to Elihu. The Book of Ecclesiastes was ascribed by some to Solomon, by others to a writer of a later age. Writers differed with regard to the authorship of many of the Psalms and many of the Proverbs. They differed with regard to the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and the Book of Revelation, and even with regard to some of the Gospels. They multiplied controversies instead of ending them, and in some cases made matters seem doubtful that were not so.

8. The writers on evidences often attempted to prove points which were not true, and which, if they had been true, would have been no credit to the Bible or Christianity. Some of them spent more time in laboring to prove that Christianity taught doctrines which it did not teach, than in proving that the doctrines which it did teach were 'worthy of all acceptation.' Some left the impression that Christianity was a mass of vain, improbable, and incomprehensi-

Hosted by Google

ble doctrines, calculated neither to satisfy man's intellect nor his conscience, neither to renovate his heart, nor improve his life, nor increase his happiness. Such writers served the cause of infidelity rather than the cause of Christ.

9. Some, like Hartwell Horne, gave so many rules for interpreting the Bible, and required such a multitude of rare qualifications to fit a man for being a Bible student, that they left the impression on one's mind that the Book must be utterly unintelligible to people at large. And they directed the attention of their readers so much to matters of little or no moment, that they lost sight of the matters which the Bible was specially intended to teach and impress on men's minds and hearts.

10. Many dwelt so much on things doubtful, that they left the impression on the minds of their readers, that there was little or nothing but what *was* doubtful. They busied themselves so much in answering objections, that they left the impression that there was little or nothing but what was open to objections. They had so little to say about what was true, and good, and glorious beyond all question, that they left people in doubt whether there was any thing past question or controversy in Christianity or not.

11. And many treated the subject so coolly or carelessly, that they abated rather than increased the interest of their readers in religious matters.

12. And the great mass of writers followed one another so servilely,—they wrote so much by rote, and so little from experience or real knowledge, that all seemed cold and formal, uninteresting and unprofitable. It was a rare thing to come across a writer that touched the heart, or even satisfied the judgment.

13. And they often labored hard and long to prove points of little or no importance, while points of greatest moment were left untouched, or handled so unskillfully as to do harm rather than good.

14. And almost all had unauthorized and unscriptural theories of Scripture inspiration, which it was impossible for them to prove, and which they so manifestly failed to prove, that a critical reader could not but see their failure. They tried to justify expressions and actions which could

Hosted by Google

not be justified, and to reconcile differences which did not admit of reconciliation.

15. Even the historical arguments of Paley and Grotius consisted of so many particulars, and carried one so far back into regions with which one was so imperfectly acquainted, and into states of society which it was so difficult for one to realize, that it was impossible they should have much power over the heart; and the little they had was soon lost, when their books were laid aside. Even when we remembered the facts, and could run them over in our minds, we could not feel the force of the argument based on them, or use it so as to make it felt by others.

The historical argument drawn from miracles never exerted much satisfying power on my mind for any length of time. I could remember that it *had* satisfied me once, but that was not to feel its satisfying power then. And you could not go back to your books continually, and pore over the arguments forever. So that long before I became a doubter, I felt that the historical argument could never be useful to people generally, either in producing faith where it was not, or in perpetuating it where it was. I was sure that if mankind at large were to be brought to receive and cherish Christianity, it must be by proofs of a simpler and more popular kind, which people could feel, and carry along with them in their hearts as well as in their heads. And now I see most clearly that I was right. Miracles had a use, and I may show what it was by and by; but it was not the use to which they have been so often and so vainly applied.

16. The writers on prophecy were as unsatisfactory as those on miracles. They often handled the prophecies unfairly if not deceitfully. They treated as absolute prophecies, prophecies which were expressly conditional. And they lost sight of the fact, so plainly stated in Jeremiah xviii, that all prophetic promises and threatenings are conditional. Then they took one bit of a prophecy and left another: kept out of sight predictions which had not been fulfilled, and dwelt exclusively on phrases which had been fulfilled.

They dealt deceitfully with history as well as prophecy. They made or modified facts. They gave fanciful interpretations to prophecies. And they tried to make prophecy

Hosted by Google

prove what it could not prove, however unquestionable and miraculous the fulfilment might be. The manner in which Nelson and Keith dealt with prophecy was often childish, and even dishonest. A careful examination of their works left a most painful impression on my mind.

What Albert Barnes says about much of the reasoning of preachers and divines is applicable to this class of writers more than to some others. 'A great part of the reasoning founded upon prophecies is unsound. Much of the reasoning employed by the early Christian Fathers, by the Schoolmen, and by the Reformers had no intrinsic force: it was based on ignorance and error. Yet theologians are prone to cling to it. They forget the age in which they live. They linger, they live, among the shades of the past. Their thoughts, their dialect, their way of reasoning are all of other days.

'The quality of another kind of reasoning common among divines is, that it is not understood by the mass of men, and that it does not seem to be understood by those who use it.'

17. In the following paragraph he speaks important words about theology as well as about theological reasoning.

'There is much theology,' says he, 'that a good man cannot preach. It would shock his own feelings; it would contradict his prayers; it would be fatal to all his efforts to do good; it would drive off the sinner to a hopeless distance, though he had begun to return to God; it would be at war with the elementary convictions which men have of what must be true. Among the doctrines of this theology are those,—that Christ died for the salvation of only a part of mankind,—that we are to blame for Adam's sin,—condemned for an act done ages before we were born.

'The theology that should be preached to make the pulpit what it should be, should be based on obvious and honest principles of Scripture interpretation. The preacher is the interpreter of a book, and he should be the voice, the organ, of its true and natural meaning. Nothing should be misquoted; nothing should be perverted or misapplied. His interpretation should be seen and felt to be in harmony with the scope, the drift, the spirit, the aim of the Bible. The success of preaching has been greatly hindered by false

Hosted by Google

principles of Biblical interpretation. In interpreting other books men have gone on rational principles; but in interpreting the Bible they have gone on principles quite irrational. They have sought for double senses, and mystical meanings, and used texts as proofs of doctrines, that had no reference to the doctrines whatever. Metaphors and symbols have had all possible meanings forced on them. Infidels and men of the world are approached with arguments that are little less than insults to their understandings. They are disgusted, instead of being convinced. They are led to look on the Bible with disdain. They are willing to remain infidels, rather than become idiots. One is pained and sickened that such a multitude of impertinent and inapplicable texts should be brought as proofs of Christian doctrine;—texts applicable to anything else rather than the points under consideration. Even Dr. Edwards misuses texts of Scripture thus. The Bible is to be interpreted as other books are. Men are not to hide themselves in the mist of a hidden meaning, and shock the common sense of the world. Preachers should go on the supposition, that in every congregation there are shrewd and sagacious men, who can appreciate a good argument, and see the weakness of a bad one: men who can appreciate a good sermon, if there be a good sermon to be appreciated. For such, he may be assured, is the fact.'

All these unwise things had a tendency to shake my faith in writers on the evidences, to lessen my interest in the subject, to abate my confidence in the knowledge and integrity of the authors, and to diminish my faith in the supernatural origin of the Bible and Christianity.

18. The evidences that had most weight with me were the internal evidences. But these were often handled in an unsatisfactory way. The greater part of Soame Jenyns' little work was good, as far as it went; but it went only a very short way. It took a step or two, in the most difficult, doubtful, and uninviting part of the road, but it left the vast paradise of internal evidences unexplored, and even unapproached. His work was rather an apology for Christianity, proving that it was not open to censure, than a demonstration of its incalculable worth and power.

I did not myself see clearly at the time, that the adap-

Hosted by Google

tation of Christianity to man's wants, to man's nature, and its tendency to promote man's temporal as well as his spiritual welfare, was really a proof of its divine origin. I saw that it was a valid answer to the infidel objection that it was useless or mischievous; but not that it was a decisive proof of its divinity. Hence though I employed it as a refutation of infidel charges against Christianity, I never pressed it further.

And though I got at length much larger views of the excellency of Christianity than those presented by Soame Jenyns, I saw not half, I saw not a tenth of its worth and glory. I saw not a tenth even of what I see now. I now see there are no limits to the excellency of Christianity, or to the power of the argument supplied by its glorious character, in proof of its divinity.

And the worth and excellency of Christianity you can carry continually in your mind. They present themselves whenever you open the Gospels, or look at Jesus. They move you whenever you think of the happy effect Christianity has had on your own hearts and lives. They come to your minds whenever you look on the prevailing vices and miseries of society, which result from a want of Christianity. They touch your heart, as well as convince your judgment. But I neither saw them in their true light nor in their full extent before I fell into doubt; so that they were unable to make up for the deficiency in the external evidences, and to check my growing tendency to unbelief.

19. There were other influences that helped me down to unbelief. Negative criticism, pulling things to pieces with a view to find faults, to which our modern philosophers give the fine name of *Analysis*, tends to cause doubt about every thing. It eats out of one the very soul of truth, of love, and of faith. It tends naturally to kill all our good instincts and natural affections, and to render not only religion, but philosophy, virtue and happiness impossible. The Cartesian system of reasoning, which begins by calling in question every thing, and which refuses to believe anything without formal proof, is essentially vicious. The man who adopts it and carries it out thoroughly, must necessarily become an infidel, not only in religion, but in morals and philosophy. And he must become intolerably miserable, and

Hosted by Google

destroy himself, unless, like John S. Mill, he can find out some method of deceiving himself.

And this is the system of reasoning now in vogue. This vicious system I adopted, and it hastened my fall into unbelief as a matter of course. Not one of all the most important things on earth admits of proof in this formal way. You cannot prove your own existence in this way. You cannot prove the existence of the universe. You cannot prove the existence of God. You cannot prove that there are such things as vice and virtue, good and evil. You cannot prove that men ought to marry, rear families, form governments, live in society, tell the truth, be honest, restrain their appetites and passions, or abstain from treachery and murder. All reasonings in favor of religion, virtue, society, philosophy, must rest on assumptions,—must take a number of things for granted,—must take for granted the truth and goodness of those instincts, sentiments, and natural affections which constrain us to be religious, social, and moral, independent of argument. All reasoning, to be of any use, must begin, not with doubt, but belief. The reasoning that begins with doubting every thing, and accepting nothing till it is proved by formal argument, will end in doubt of every thing that ought to be believed. It will end, not only in Atheism, but in boundless immorality, and in utter wretchedness and ruin. The man who would not be undone by his logic, must pity Descartes instead of admiring him, and instead of following him go just the contrary way. Descartes made a fool of himself, or his method of reasoning made a fool of him, the very first time he used it. His very first argument was a fallacy and a folly. He pretended, first, to doubt, and then to prove, his own existence. His argument was, 'I think; therefore I *exist:*' as if he could be more sure that he *thought*, than he was that he existed. He took his existence for granted when he said 'I think.'

20. Other things helped on the horrible change that was taking place in my soul. I got a taste for reading a different kind of works from those which I had been accustomed to read. I turned away from works on religion and duty, and began to read the works of the critical, destructive party. I turned away even from the best practical writers of the orthodox school, such as Baxter, Tillotson and Bar-

Hosted by Google

row, and read Theodore Parker, Martineau, W. F. Newman, W. J. Fox, and Froude. I also read Carlyle, Emerson, and W. Mackay, the metaphysical bore, and C. Mackay, the charming, fascinating, but not Christian poet. Theodore Parker became my favorite among the prose writers. His beautiful style and practical lessons had already reconciled me to his harsh expressions about the Bible, and to his contemptuous treatment of miracles; and now I had degenerated so far that I liked him for those very faults.

I read the writings of the American Abolitionists, all of which tended to draw me from the Church and the Bible, and to bring me more fully under skeptical influences. I began to look more freely and frequently into works of science, and most of those waged covert war with supernaturalism, and sought to bring down the Bible and Christianity to the level of ordinary human thought. All ideas of authority in books and religious systems, in ecclesiastical and social institutions, gradually faded away. All ideas of superhuman authority, or divine obligation, in marriage, in home, and in family life vanished. All things lost their sacredness, and came down to the vulgar level of mere human opinion, or of personal interest, convenience, or pleasure.

21. There was a change in my companions. Those who had high and holy thoughts of all things, and whose meat and drink it was to do good, withdrew from me; and men and women came around me who cared only for earth and self; whose talk was of gain, and fashion, and self-indulgence; and whose desire it was to silence conscience, and to stifle thoughts of duty.

22. I ceased to pray. I had already given up family prayer. I now gave up private prayer. I gave up prayer altogether. I had impulses to prayer, but I resisted them. Prayer was irrational, according to the new philosophy, and must be discarded.

23. And praise and thanksgiving went next. What reason could there be for telling an all-wise God what you thought of Him, or how you felt towards Him? And besides, it now began to appear that God had not been so very bountiful as to deserve either high commendation, or enthusiastic thanksgiving.

Hosted by Google

24. I had fresh work. Politics first got into partnership with my religion, and then turned religion out of the concern. And politics, severed from religion, soon become selfish, and even devilish. So long as Christian philanthropy occupied my thoughts and feelings, it helped religiousness; but when it gave way to politics, my religiousness declined, languished, and died.

25. I began to indulge in amusements. Chess, drafts, cards, concerts, theatres, and feasting asked for a portion of my time and money, and I gave it to them. I began to think of pleasure more than of usefulness; to live for myself rather than for others; and the higher virtues and religion went down together.

26. My position improved. I passed from poverty to comparative wealth. This helped my degeneracy. I had more abundant means of self-indulgence, and I began, though slowly, timidly, and with misgivings, and self-reproaches, and occasional fits of remorse, to use them for selfish, worldly purposes. God had given me more, so I gave Him less. Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked. Jesus knew what He was saying when He warned people against the danger, the deceitfulness, of riches.

27. I was often uneasy during the decline of religion in my soul, but philosophy had its anodynes, its soothing syrups, its dreamy, delusive, spiritual drugs. It could flatter, it could cheat, in the most approved fashion. It could bewitch, intoxicate, and take captive the whole soul,—judgment, conscience, fancy, everything.

Satan can put on the appearance of an 'angel of light.' He can talk religion. He can talk philanthropy. He can preach the most beautiful doctrines. He can use the most charming words. At the very moment that he is destroying religion and virtue, he can speak of them in the highest terms, and even sing of them in the sweetest strains. He can talk of liberty in the most swelling, high-sounding, and fascinating style, while all the time he is making men the most degraded and miserable slaves. He can lead people, singing and dancing, laughing and shouting, through a philosopher's paradise, to a purgatory of guilt and horror. And all the time he will preach to them the finest doctrines; the most exalted sentiments. 'Religion!—everything is

Hosted by Google

religion, that is in accordance with the laws of our own nature, that is suitable to our position and relations, that helps our brothers or our families. And all truth is religious truth. All science is divine revelation. All laws are God's laws, except the arbitrary laws of men. All work is divine work, if it be according to nature. All useful work is religion. Farming, trade, government, are all religion. So are waking and sleeping. They are all divine ordinances; they are all divine service. All good work is worship. Singing foolish hymns, reading foolish lessons, preaching foolish sermons, offering foolish prayers, in unhealthy churches, half stifled with foul air, are not religion. Religion is the free and natural utterance of great, true thoughts, of good and generous feelings, of nature's own rich sentiments and inspirations. The flowery fields, the shadowy woods, the lofty mountains are nobler places of worship than the dark and damp cathedral; and the fresh air of heaven is a diviner inspiration than carbonic acid gas. And the sun is a diviner light than waxen tapers, explosive lamps, or oxygen-consuming gas. And the gorgeous sun-tinted clouds are grander and more beautiful than painted windows! God's temple is all space; His altar; earth, air, skies! His ministers are sun, moon, stars; birds, beasts, and flowers. Nature is God's revelation; the true Bible; written in an universal language; speaking to all eyes; needing no translation; in danger of no interpolation, alteration, or mutilation. Man is the true Shekinah,—the veritable image, the real glory, the true revelation and manifestation of God. Man is the saviour of man: the teacher, the guide, the comforter of man. Every one, male or female, is a servant, a minister of God. All are priests. All are kings. The truth makes us free: free from all authorities, but the authority of God,—God in the soul. Christ is our brother, not our master. He is a helper, not a ruler. And all are helpers of each other. All are saviours. All are Christs. Inspiration is not a matter of time, or place, or person. It is eternal and universal. It is in all, and it endures forever. Every good book is a Bible. Every good hymn or song is a holy psalm. Purity of body is holiness, as well as purity of mind. Every day is a sabbath, a holy day. Every place is holy ground. The

Hosted by Google

Church of God is the human race. All are God's disciples, under training by nature's operations, and by the events of daily life. The earth is God's great school-house; mankind are one great school; God is our chief Master; the universe is our lesson book, and all we are ushers and under teachers. All things are our helpers, not masters;—our servants, not lords. They are made for us, not we for them; and must be used so as to make them answer their ends. The Sabbath was made for man; not man for the Sabbath. Bibles are for men, not men for Bibles. Governments, churches, authorities, laws, institutions, customs, events, suns, moons, stars, systems, atoms, elements, all are made for man, and to man's interest and pleasure they must be subordinated. All must be changed to meet man's changing wants. Nothing is entitled to be permanent, but that which answers beneficently to something permanent in man. Man is lord of the universe. Man is lord of himself. Man is his own rightful governor. Man is his own law. His nature is his law. Each individual man is his own law. Individualities are divine, and must be respected; respected by laws and governments. Law must yield to individuality; not individuality to law. Individuality is sacred. The individuality of the individual is his life, and must be fostered. It is a new manifestation of God. As to means of grace,—all expressions and interchanges of kind feeling are means of grace. Shaking hands is a means of grace. Free, friendly talk, a concert or a song, a social ride, a family feast, a social gathering, a pleasant chat, a game at whist, all are means of grace. All are holy to holy souls. All are pure to pure minds. Eating, drinking, sleeping are all divine ordinances. Religion, in its higher and more enlightened form, raises our views of all things; makes all things beautiful; all things glorious. It does not bring down the high and holy; but lifts up all things to a divine level. It desecrates no temple; but consecrates the universe. It breaks no Sabbath; but makes every day a Sabbath, and all time one lengthened holy day. It degrades no priest; but makes all men priests. It does not bring down the high, but raises the low. It denies not heaven; but brings down heaven to earth. Everywhere is heaven.

Hosted by Google

God's kingdom is an universal kingdom. His presence, His throne, His glory, are everywhere, and heaven is all around us and within us. The universe is heaven.' Thus spake the devil.

And now came in his progressive poets to give those broad, those high, those rational, those philosophical principles, this theology and religion of advanced humanity, this Church and worship of the future, the fascination of their ecstatic genius, and all the charms of numbers, rhyme, and melody. 'My religion is love,' sings one, 'the richest and fairest.' 'Abou Ben Adhem,' sings another. 'He loves not God; but loves God's creature man. Give him a place,—the highest place,—in heaven.' Another sings, 'The poor man's Sunday walk.' The advanced religionist, addressing his wife, exclaims,

The morning of our rest has come,
  The sun is shining clear;
I see it on the steeple-top:
  Put on your shawl, my dear,
And let us leave the smoky town,
  The dense and stagnant lane,
And take our children by the hand
  To see the fields again.
I've pined for air the livelong week;
  For the smell of new-mown hay;
For a pleasant, quiet, country walk,
  On a sunny Sabbath day.

Our parish church is cold and damp;
  I need the air and sun;
We'll sit together on the grass,
  And see the children run.
We'll watch them gather butter-cups,
  Or cowslips in the dell,
Or listen to the cheerful sounds
  Of the far-off village bell;
And thank our God with grateful hearts,
  Though in the fields we pray;
And bless the healthful breeze of heaven,
  On a sunny Sabbath day.

Hosted by Google

I'm weary of the stifling room,
Where all the week we're pent;
Of the alley fill'd with wretched life,
And odors pestilent:
And long once more to see the fields,
And the grazing sheep and beeves;
To hear the lark amid the clouds,
And the wind among the leaves;
And all the sounds that glad the air
On green hills far away:—
The sounds that breathe of Peace and Love,
On a sunny Sabbath day.

For somehow, though they call it wrong,
In church I cannot kneel
With half the natural thankfulness
And piety I feel
When out, on such a day as this,
I lie upon the sod,
And think that every leaf and flower
Is grateful to its God;
That I, who feel the blessing more,
Should thank Him more than they,
That I can elevate my soul
On a sunny Sabbath day.

Put on your shawl, and let us go;
For one day let us think
Of something else than daily care,
Or toil, and meat, and drink:
For one day let our children sport
And feel their limbs their own:
For one day let us quite forget
The grief that we have known:—
Let us forget that we are poor;
And, basking in the ray,
Thank God that we can still enjoy
A sunny Sabbath day.

What can be more natural,—what more plausible,—what more rational,—what more pious? Yet it means for-

Hosted by Google

getfulness of God, forgetfulness of Christ, forgetfulness of duty, forgetfulness of immortality. It means self, and sin, and ruin. And so it is with a multitude of other sweet poems. One of the sweetest singers that ever received a poetic soul from God, ignores Christ and Christianity. His works are full of truth, but it is truth turned into a lie, and made to do the work of sin and death. It is Satan clad as an angel of light.

Every day a Sabbath, means no day a Sabbath. All places holy, means no place holy. All things worship, means nothing worship. All honest labor religious, means no labor religious. Freedom means license, contempt for virtue, enslavement to vice. Progress means falling back. Elevation means degradation. Liberality means leniency to error and evil, and severity towards truth and goodness. In short, darkness means light, and light means darkness; good means evil, and evil good; bitter means sweet, and sweet bitter. Reform means revolution, and renovation means degradation, and all these charming things mean wretchedness and ruin.

We must not be understood as condemning all the sentiments uttered by the great deceiver. Many of them are true and good. They are Christian. Satan is too wise to preach unmitigated falsehood. He understands too well the art of using truth so as to serve the ends of falsehood. It is enough for him if he can sever men's souls from Christ, and truth from divine authority, and religion from Christianity, the Church, and the Bible. Allow him to do this, and he will discourse and sing to you a world of sweet words and lofty sentiments. Truth is the ladder by which men climb to God, and goodness, and heaven. But Satan has found out that there is a way *down* the ladder as well as *up*, and that to praise the ladder to the descending crowd is the surest way to draw them ever further downward, till they lose themselves amid the blinding smoke of the abyss beneath. We love, we cherish every sweet word of truth, but we value nothing apart from God, and Christ, and Religion.

28. It is a bad thing when people are taught things in their youth that are not true. They are sure, when they become students, if they are honest and able, to find out the errors,

Hosted by Google

and to lay them aside. And the mere habit of detecting and laying aside errors, has a tendency to make men skeptical. Now I had been taught a multitude of things in my youth that were not true, both with regard to the doctrines and the evidences of Christianity. These things I detected and set aside in riper years. And I had so many things to set aside, that I came to look with suspicion on almost all my creed. The skeptical tendency got too strong for my habit of belief. I suspected where there was no good ground for suspicion. I rejected truth as well as error. I held in doubt doctrines that I ought to have cherished as my life. Change became too easy; judgment too hasty; and error and unbelief were naturally the result.

It is especially a bad thing when an earnest young student sees signs of carelessness in religious writers; a readiness to repeat what has been said before; to support what is popular, without endeavoring to ascertain whether it be true or not. It is still worse when a student discovers in religious writers signs of dishonesty and fraud. I discovered both. I saw cases in which false doctrines were passed on from generation to generation, and from writer to writer, without the least attempt to ascertain their true character. I saw other cases in which dishonesty was manifest, in which fraud was used, in support of doctrines. Old creeds were allowed to remain unaltered, long after portions of them had been found to be unscriptural; and error was subscribed as a matter of course. The result was, a distrust of everything held by such parties, unless it was supported by the plainest and most decisive proofs.

29. I was now in a state of mind to go down quietly and almost unconsciously into utter unbelief. And I *went* down. I did not *reject* the doctrine of the divine origin of the Bible and Christianity, but gradually *lost* it. My faith died a natural death. I was in the world, and became a worldly man. I mixed with unbelievers, and gradually came down to their level. I had supposed that a man could be as religious outside the Church as inside; but I found it otherwise. It was a sad, an awful change I underwent; but I not only did not see it, at the time, in its true light, but was actually unconscious for a long time that it was taking place.

In November 1852, I attended a Bible convention at

Hosted by Google

Salem, Columbiana County, Ohio. It lasted three days. I spoke repeatedly, and at considerable length, at its meetings. My remarks were directed chiefly, not against the Bible, but against what I regarded as unauthorized theories of Scripture inspiration. I contended that those theories were injurious to the interests of virtue and humanity.

I also spoke about the darkness in which the human authorship of portions of the Bible was wrapt. My remarks were a mixture of truth and error, but in their general tenor they were unjust, and could hardly fail to be injurious.

Henry C. Wright spoke at this convention, contending that man had an infallible rule of life engraven on his own nature, independent of instruction from without. He was often severe and extravagant in his remarks. He was fierce, and said things which he could not make good.

The Rev. Jonas Harzell and others spoke in defence of the Bible.

On the last evening the hall in which the convention was held was densely crowded, and the audience was greatly excited. A Mr. Ambler spoke at great length, and seemed desirous to excite the people to violence against the assailants of the Bible. When he closed, a large portion of the audience seemed bent on mischief. I rose to reply to Mr. Ambler, and soon got the attention of the audience. Their rage quickly subsided, and at the close of my address, the people separated in peace.

In June 1853, I attended another Bible convention at Hartford, Connecticut. I was appointed President. A. J. Davis, the celebrated spiritualist, gave the first address. It was on the propriety of free discussion on religious subjects. Henry C. Wright spoke next, making strong remarks on portions of the Old Testament. I followed, going over much the same ground as at Salem, but speaking with more severity of feeling. My heart was getting harder.

The Rev. George Storrs replied. He set himself especially to answer H. C. Wright, and he spoke with much effect.

In the afternoon of the second day, W. L. Garrison proposed six resolutions, bearing partly on the Bible, and

Hosted by Google

partly on the church and clergy. They were very strong. There was a considerable amount of truth in them, but their spirit and tendency were bad. Parker Pillsbury followed with a speech, in which he praised natural religion, but condemned the religion of the church.

In the evening Mr. Garrison spoke. He spoke with much power. He dwelt chiefly on what was called the doctrine of *plenary inspiration*. His strength was in the extreme views of the orthodox theologians, and in the inconsistencies of the church and the clergy.

Mr. Garrison made a second speech on the fourth evening, still dwelling on the theory of *plenary inspiration*. Before he got through his speech the meeting was disturbed by a number of theological students, from a college in the city. They threatened mischief. One displayed a dagger. Confusion followed. Some of the speakers fled, and others were alarmed. I kept my place, but soon found I had the platform to myself. I expected more courage from my skeptical friends. But they understood Judge Lynch better than I did, and their discretion, under the circumstances, might be the better part of valor. My rashness, however, ended in no mishap. And the only bad effect which the violence of our opponents had on me was, to increase my hatred, perhaps, of the church and its theology. It is not wise in professing Christians to resort to carnal weapons in defence of their views.

In December 1853, I gave a course of lectures in Philadelphia. I was brought to the city by the Sunday Institute. The object of the lectures was to show, that the Bible was of human origin, that its teachings were not of divine authority, and that the doctrine of its absolute perfection was injurious in its tendency. The room in which I lectured was crowded, and the audience was much excited. I stated, in opening, that I had nothing to say against anything that was true and good in the Bible,—that virtue was essential to man's happiness, and that I had no sympathy with those who rejected the Bible because it rebuked their vices. I was sincere in these remarks; but my older infidel friends, I found, regarded them as intended to deceive the unwary. Many of them were grossly immoral, and hated the Bible for its hostility to their evil ways.

Hosted by Google

After each lecture discussion followed. But the ability of my opponents was not equal to their zeal. They were often ignorant of both sides of the question, and injured the cause they sought to aid.

These lectures led to a public discussion between me and Dr. McCalla, a Presbyterian clergyman. It was to continue five nights, but ended on the fourth. We met first in the Chinese Assembly Room; but the place proving too small for the crowds which were anxious to hear the debate, we adjourned to the large hall.

Dr. McCalla was very abusive. He was so intent on calling me bad names, and on saying savage and provoking things, that he forgot his argument. I kept to the subject. I neither abused my opponent, nor spent my time in answering his abuse of me. I reproved him once or twice, telling him how unseemly it was in an old man, professing to be a disciple and a minister of Jesus, to show such a spiteful disposition, and to utter such offensive words; and then went on with my argument. The third night my opponent seemed to be losing his reason. On the fourth night he was literally mad. Loss of sleep, rage, and mortification, seemed to have brought on fever of the brain, and he was really insane. His friends were terribly put about. Many of them were furious, and were plainly bent on violence. A policeman climbed up the back of the platform behind where I was sitting and said in my ear: 'There's mischief brewing: you had better come with me. Step down now while they are looking the other way.' I looked for my overcoat and hat, but they were gone. Some one had carried them off, to prevent me from escaping. A gentleman who had seen a person take them away, and place them in a distant corner of the room, seeing what was coming, went and brought them to me, and I at once slipped over the back of the platform to the floor, and accompanied the policeman. The crowd, intent on getting towards the front of the platform, had left a vacant space near the wall, and I and the policeman got nearly to the door of the hall before we were observed. But just as we were passing out a cry arose, 'He's off! He's off!' and a maddened crowd prepared for pursuit. When we got into the street the policeman said

Hosted by Google

hurriedly, 'Which is the way to your lodgings?' 'That,' said I, pointing south. 'Then come this way,' said he, 'quick;' and he pulled me north. This probably saved my life. The mob knew which way my lodgings lay, and as soon as they got out of the hall, they hurried south, like a pack of hounds, roaring and furious. I was soon half a mile away in the other direction. 'Where shall I take you?' said the policeman. 'Do you know any one hereabouts?' 'Take me to Mr. Mott's,' said I, 'in Arch Street.' We were there in a few moments, and as the door opened to receive me, the policeman received his gratuity, and hastened away. In fifteen minutes there was a noise in the street. Mr. Mott opened the door and looked out, when a brickbat passed just by his head, and broke itself to pieces on the door-post, leaving its mark on the marble. He had a narrow escape. He closed the door, and after awhile the mob dispersed, and all was quiet. Thus ended the discussion with Dr. McCalla.

One would have thought that after such an experience as this, I should have taken care to keep out of debates on such an exciting subject. But I was daring to madness. I was engaged again in discussion on the same subject, in the same city, in less than a month.

The clergy of Philadelphia, unwilling to leave the cause of the Bible in this plight, demanded that I should discuss the question with Dr. Berg, a minister in whom they had great confidence. I yielded to the demand, and the discussion took place in Concert Hall, in January, 1854.

The hall was crowded every night. One very wet and stormy night, the number present was only 2000, but every other night it was from 2250 to 2400. A Philadelphia newspaper of that period says, "We cannot forbear to notice the contrast in the manner and bearing of the two disputants. Mr. Barker uniformly bore himself as a gentleman, courteously and respectfully towards his opponent, and with the dignity becoming his position, and the solemnity and importance of the question. We regret we cannot say the same of Dr. Berg, who at times seemed to forget the obligations of the gentleman, in his zeal as a controversialist. He is an able and skilful debater, though less logical than Mr. Barker; but he wasted his time and

Hosted by Google

strength too often on personalities and irrelevant matters. His personal inuendoes and offensive epithets, his coarse witticisms and arrogant bearing, may have suited the vulgar and intolerant among his party, but they won him no respect from the calm and thinking portion of the audience; while we know that they grieved and offended some intelligent and candid men who thoroughly agreed with his views. It is time that Christians and clergymen had learned that men whom they regard as heretics and infidels have not forfeited all claims to the respect and courtesies of social life by their errors of opinion, and that insolence and arrogance, contemptuous sneers and impeachment of motives and character towards such men, are not effective means of grace for their enlightenment and conversion.

"There was a large number of men among the audience who lost their self-control in their dislike of Mr. Barker's views, and he was often interrupted, and sometimes checked in his argument, by hisses, groans, sneers, vulgar cries, and clamors, though through all these annoyances and repeated provocations, he maintained his wonted composure of manner and his clearness of thought. On the other hand, Dr. Berg was heard with general quiet by his opponents, and greeted with clamorous applause by his friends."

I am afraid the above remarks were true. Still, Dr. Berg was almost a gentleman compared with Dr. McCalla, and he was vastly more of a scholar and debater, far as he was from being a model disputant.

Dr. Berg had the right side; he stood for the defence of all that was good, and true, and great, and glorious; but the way in which he went about his work was by no means the best one. He took a wrong position,—a position which it was impossible for him to maintain. His doctrine was that the Bible was absolutely perfect,—that the inspiration of the Book was such as not only to make it a fit and proper instrument for the religious instruction, and the moral and spiritual renovation, of mankind, but such as to preserve it from all the innocent, harmless, and unimportant weaknesses, imperfections, and errors of regenerate and sanctified humanity. He even contended for a kind or a degree of perfection which many of the most

Hosted by Google

highly esteemed professors and theologians of orthodox churches had relinquished. He held to views about the creation and the universality of the deluge, which orthodox Christian Geologists like Professor Hitchcock of America, as well as Dr. Pye Smith of England, had given up as untenable. He contended for a perfection which, in fact, is physically impossible, and which, in truth, was inconsistent with his own acknowledgments in other parts of the discussion. I have no wish to disparage my opponent; I had rather do the contrary; but he did not properly and adequately understand the great question which he undertook to discuss. Hence he got involved in inextricable difficulties, and, in spite of all he could do, his attempted defence of the Bible was, to a great extent, a failure.

He said a many good things about the Bible. He proved a many things in its favor. He made the impression, at times, that there was something in its teachings of a most powerful and blessed tendency; that it was a book of infinite value,—that it was a wonderful teacher and a mighty comforter,—that it had done a vast amount of good, and was calculated to do a vast amount more,—that it was a friend and patron of all things good and glorious,—that it was the nurse of individual and national virtue, and the source of personal, domestic, and national happiness. He said many good things about the excellency of Christ's precepts, and the beauty and glory of His example. A hundred good things he said, both in favor of the Bible, and in opposition to infidelity. But the one great point which he had pledged himself to prove he did *not* prove. It could not be proved. It was not true. So that though he won a substantial victory; he sustained a logical defeat. And if he had been twenty times more learned, and twenty times more able than he was, he would have been defeated. If a man attempts the impossible, failure is inevitable; and if he has a skilful, wary, and able opponent, his failure will be seen and felt, even by his most ardent friends, and greatest admirers. And so it was in the case of Dr. Berg.

But the error was not his alone; it was the error of his friends; the error of his patrons; the error of his times. What learning, and talent, and zeal, and skill in debate,

Hosted by Google

considerably above the average of his profession, could do, he did; and that was a good deal: and his failure was chargeable not on himself, so much as on the faulty theology of the school in which he had been trained, and to which he still belonged.

So far as the general merits of the Bible were concerned, I was in the wrong. But the fact was not made so plain, so palpable to the audience, as it should have been, and as it might have been, if I had had a wiser, a warier, and an abler opponent, and one who had no false theory of Bible inspiration or abstract perfection to defend. A man thoroughly furnished for the work, and free from foolish and unauthorized theories, would have been able to give proof of the substantial truth and divinity of the Scriptures, and of their transcendent moral and spiritual excellence, absolutely overwhelming; and I do most heartily wish I had had the happiness to encounter such an advocate in my discussions. It might have proved an infinite advantage to me, and an incalculable blessing to my friends. As it was, the debate only tended to strengthen me in my unbelief, and to increase my confidence in future controversies with the clergy.

How I answered my own arguments, and got over my own objections, when on my way back to Christianity, I may state hereafter. All I need say here is, that I took a *qualified* view of the divine authority of the Bible, and of the doctrine of its divine inspiration,—a view in accordance with facts, and with the teachings of Scripture itself on the subject. This view did not require me to demand in a book of divine origin the kind of abstract or absolute perfection which Dr. Berg required, and which he so rashly undertook to prove. On the contrary, it taught me to look for a thousand innocent and unimportant errors and imperfections in the Bible. A thousand things which would, if proved, have been regarded by Dr. Berg as valid objections to the doctrine of its superhuman authority and divine authority, were no objections at all to me. I could acknowledge the truth of them all, and yet believe in the substantial truth and divinity of the Book as a whole. The dust and mud of our streets and roads, and the decaying timbers and rotting grasses of our forests and farms

Hosted by Google

do not make me question the divine origin and the substantial perfection of the world: nor do the errors and imperfections of ancient transcribers or modern translators, or the want of absolute scientific, historical, chronological, literary, theological or moral perfection even in the original authors of the Bible, make me doubt its divine origin and inspiration, or its practical and substantial perfection. You may show me ten thousand things in the earth which, to multitudes, would seem inconsistent with the doctrine that it is the work of an all-perfect Creator; but they would not be inconsistent with that doctrine in *my* view. They would probably seem, to my mind, proofs of its truth. Things which, to men who had not properly studied them, appeared serious defects, or results of Adam's sin, would be seen by me to be important excellencies; masterpieces of infinite wisdom and goodness. Many of the things I said about the Bible in my debate with Dr. Berg were true; but they amounted to nothing. Dr. Berg thought they were serious charges, and that if they were not refuted, they would destroy the credit and power of the Book. He was mistaken. And he never did refute them. If I were in the place of Dr. Berg, and an opponent were to bring forward those things in proof that the Bible was not of God, I should say, Your statements may be true, or they may be false, and I do not care much which they are; but they are good for nothing as disproofs of the divine origin and practical perfection of the Bible. The Bible is all it professes to be, and it is more and better than its greatest admirers suppose it to be, notwithstanding its numberless traces of innocent human imperfections. The sun has spots, but they neither disprove its value nor its divine origin. The probability is, that the spots in the sun have their use, and would be seen, if properly understood, to be proofs of the wisdom and goodness of the Creator. And it is certainly plain to me, that what you regard as defects in the Bible, are proofs both of its divine origin, and of its real perfection.

I said some things about the Bible in my debate with Dr. Berg, which, if they had been true, would have proved that the Bible was *not* of divine origin. But they were not true. All these things should have been refuted by Dr.

Hosted by Google

Berg with great promptness, and refuted so thoroughly and plainly, that every one should have been made to see and feel that they were refuted. But they were not. Some of them were left unnoticed. Others were handled unskilfully. The time and strength that should have been given to them were wasted on trifles, or unwisely spent in offensive personalities, unseasonable witticisms, or attempts at fine speaking.

The objections of this class, which my opponent failed to answer, or answered unsatisfactorily, we may notice further on.

In January, 1855, while over on business, I had a public debate at Halifax, England, with Brewin Grant, a congregational minister. This, so far as its impression on my own mind was concerned, was the most unfortunate discussion I ever had. My opponent was the meanest and most unprincipled or ill-principled man I ever met. In a pamphlet which he had published, giving instructions to those who were called to defend the Bible and Christianity against unbelievers, he had laid it down as a rule, that their first object should be to destroy the influence of their opponents, and that in order to do this, they should do their utmost to damage their reputation, and make them odious. He acted on this principle, in his debate with me, with the greatest fidelity. He raked together, and gave forth in his speeches, all the foolish and wicked stories which my old persecutors had fabricated and spread abroad respecting me, except those about my having committed suicide, and being smothered to death, and some others which were so notoriously false that they could no longer be used to my disadvantage. Those stories he improved by making them worse. He made a number of new ones also.

I had published a book, giving the story of my life up to the time of my expulsion from the Methodist New Connexion. This work, like my other works, was written in the clearest and simplest style, so that no man with ordinary abilities could fail to understand it, and no man without powers of perversion bordering on the miraculous, could give to any part of it an objectionable meaning. This book he took, and read, and misread, and interpreted, and misinterpreted, so as to make the impression on persons unacquainted with

Hosted by Google

it, that I had written and published the most foolish, ridiculous, and in some cases, really discreditable things of myself, and even false and unwarrantable statements about others.

Before the discussion came on he gave a lecture on this book. I went to hear it. He spoke about an hour, and every quotation from the work, and every reference he made to it, was false. There was not a word of truth in the whole lecture. There was not a sentence which was not as opposite to truth and as full of falsehood as he could make it. And the ingenuity he displayed in his task was marvellous. It was really devilish. He enlarged my conception of the evil powers of wicked men, in the line of turning good into evil, and truth into lies, beyond all that I could otherwise have imagined. He did a hundred things, the least of which my poor limited capacity would have deemed impossible.

He pursued the same course in the debate. He went as far beyond poor McCalla, as McCalla had gone beyond ordinary sinners. If I had undertaken to correct his misrepresentations, and expose his fictions, I should not have had one moment to give to the subject we were met to discuss. So I did as I did with McCalla, I rebuked the man with becoming severity; I contradicted his statements in the plainest and strongest way I could; I also offered to arrange for a discussion of personal matters, if he wished it, after we had gone through our discussion of principles, and engaged to prove every discreditable story he told of me to be false, and then went on with the discussion. He accepted my challenge to discuss personalities, but neither kept his engagement, nor abated his efforts at misrepresentation during the remainder of the debate.

He was not content with sober, sad, deliberate falsehood; he resorted to ridicule. He pulled comical and ugly faces; put out his tongue; put his thumb to his nose; threw orange peel at me; and said and did other things which it is not lawful for me to utter.

He had thought, I suppose, to disgust me; to tire me out; to make me withdraw from the debate, and give him the opportunity of saying he had put me to flight. He was mistaken. I kept my ground. And I kept my temper.

Hosted by Google

And I kept my gravity. I rebuked him at times with becoming sternness, and then went on with my task. It is probable that I spoke more strongly against the Bible, and that I said harder things against the church and the ministry, than I should have done, if he had conducted himself with any regard to truth and decency; but I did not raise my voice above its usual pitch, nor did I show any unusual signs of indignation, disgust, or irritation. My feelings became more intense, my language more cutting, and my style and logic more pointed and forcible; but my manner was calm, and my behaviour guarded.

And I husbanded my strength. I let him explode, while I let off my steam quietly, and in just measure only, making every particle do its proper work. I wasted neither words, nor strength, nor time. In three or four days my wicked opponent began to get weak and weary. He had tired *himself* instead of me. He had disgusted and put to shame many of his friends. He had driven away several of his supporters. He had weakened his party. He had strengthened his opponent. He had lost, he had betrayed, his cause. He dragged on heavily. He was all but helpless. I had every thing my own way. I had an easy fight, and a decisive victory.

I had the last speech; and when the battle was over, I felt free to deal with my unprincipled opponent rather severely, and I said: "My opponent has acted, from beginning to end of this debate, in anything but a noble and manly way. I refer not merely to his personal abuse, his use of foul names, his insolence of manner, his malignity of spirit; but to the way in which he has misconducted the argument. He was pledged to prove the Bible of Divine origin and authority. He was bound to bring out, as early as possible, what he thought his strongest arguments, and afford me an opportunity of meeting them. But he did not do this. To judge from his proceedings, you would conclude that he had no faith in any of the popular arguments, such as those employed by Paley, Horne, &c. He sat watching, like an animal we need not name, for some stray thought to pounce upon. He tried every device to draw me from the question, and showed, not only the greatest reluctance, but a fixed determination, not to come

Hosted by Google

any nearer to it himself than he could possibly help. He has shown nothing like courage, nothing like confidence in the goodness of his cause, nothing like openness, candor, or generosity; nothing but craft and cunning. He has never fought like a soldier, but dodged like an assassin. Honorable men *give up* a cause that can't be honorably maintained. For myself, ye are witnesses, I came out openly, boldly, and at once, and gave my opponent the best opportunity he could have of grappling fairly with my arguments. But he would not meet them. He slunk behind his mud-battery, and instead of firing shot and shell, spurted forth filth. By-and-by he took my old deserted battery, and began to play upon me with my worn-out guns and wooden shot, till his friends compelled him to give up. He complained that I had taken up my position on Mount Horeb, and pattered him with grape-shot from the old Jewish armory, and besought and urged me to plant myself on Mount Tabor, or the Mount of Olives, and try what I could do with Christian ammunition. I did so; but even that did not please him. He stared and squalled, as if it had been raining red-hot shot, as thick as it once poured hailstones and fire in Egypt, killing every beast that was out in the fields. And thus he has gone on. He never seems to have been satisfied, either with his own position or mine. I might have pleased him, no doubt, by giving in before the battle, and surrendering at discretion; but that is not my custom. Well, now the battle draws near its close; and no one, I trust, has lost anything, but what is better lost than found. I am satisfied with my own position, and nearly so with my share of the fight. With a manlier foe, I should have had a pleasanter fight; but soldiers cannot always choose their antagonists, nor can they keep, in all cases, to their own best mode of warfare. The hunter cannot always find the noblest game; and perhaps it is better for his neighbour, if not so pleasant to himself, that he should sometimes be obliged to employ his dogs and rifles in destroying vermin.

"I feel that an apology is due from me to you and the public, for entering the lists with my opponent. It is soon given. When I first offered to meet him in discussion on the Bible, I supposed him to be a well-informed and

Hosted by Google

respectable man, and the representative of the highest intellectual and moral culture, combined with superior talent and experience as a debater, that the orthodox world could boast. I soon found out my mistake, but I did not feel at liberty to withdraw my challenge. When I learned the infamous character of his personal lectures, I declined all further correspondence with him till he should retract his slanders; but still I did not feel free to say I would not debate with him, if his friends should bring him to reasonable terms. His friends in Halifax succeeded in doing so, and out of regard to the wishes of my friends, I submitted to the temporary degradation of being placed on the same platform with my unprincipled calumniator, and the calumniator of the best, the wisest, and the greatest men of every age and nation. I do not regret having done so.

"He will leave this discussion a sadder and a wiser man. He has found that the power of insolence, and falsehood, and of vulgar, brutal wit, has its bounds; that there are those whom they cannot abash or cow; that the *might* in moral encounters is with the *right*.

"I part with my opponent without malice, though without regret. If he has natural characteristics which others have not, and lacks some higher qualities which others have, the fault is not entirely his. He did not make himself. Nor did he nurse, or rear, or train himself. He is the production, and his character may, to a great extent, be the production, of influences over which he had no control. I shall not therefore state all I have felt while listening to the false and fierce personalities with which this discussion has been disgraced. I will rather acknowledge my own errors, and lament that anything he has said or done should have been permitted, in any case, to affect my own style of advocacy, and render me less gentle or guarded in my utterances than I otherwise might have been. I retract every expression of unkindness or resentment. I apologize for everything harsh, offensive, or ungraceful in my manner; and I am sorry I could not declare and advocate my views, without shocking or distressing some of your minds. And now, with best and heartiest wishes for your welfare, and for the welfare of mankind at large, and in the full and certain hope of the

Hosted by Google

final, universal, and eternal triumph of the truth, and in the ultimate regeneration and salvation of our race, I bid you all farewell.'

This man purchased the copyright of the debate, and pledged himself to issue a correct edition, in accordance with the notes of the reporter. Instead of doing so, besides making unlimited alterations in his own speeches, he altered every speech of mine. Some things he left out. In one case, to prevent an exposure of one of his more reckless mis-statements, he left out two pages of one of my speeches. By a free and artful use of *italics*, and an abuse of stops, he altered and perverted the meaning of quite a multitude of my statements. And when, after all, he found that the publication damaged him terribly in the estimation of his friends, he suppressed it altogether.

The conduct of this opponent had a bad effect on my mind, and if anything short of sound reason could have kept me in the ranks of infidelity, it would have been the shameless, the outrageous conduct of such pretenders to Christianity as this bad man. But I thank God, such horrible and inexcusable inconsistency was not allowed to decide my fate. Better powers, sweeter and happier influences, were brought into play to counteract its deadly tendency. And even other opponents, of a worthier character and of a higher order, came in my way, who, by their Christian temper, and high culture, and by their regard for my feelings, and their manifest desire for my welfare, obliterated the bad impressions produced by the unscrupulous and malignant conduct of Brewin Grant, and all but won me over to the cause of Christ.

It happened that while I was yet in England, an arrangement was made for a public discussion between me and Colonel Michael Shaw, of Bourtree Park, Ayr. Colonel Shaw was a kind of lay minister, who preached the Gospel gratuitously, and spent his time and property in doing good. He was a Christian and a gentleman out and out; a Christian and a gentleman of the highest order. Five such men might have saved Sodom and Gomorrah, and all the cities of the plain. He was as guileless as a little child, and as honest as the light, and about as pure, and good, and kind as a regenerated human soul

Hosted by Google

could be. This, at least, was the impression which his looks, and conversation, and behaviour, made on my mind. He not only commanded my respect, but called forth my veneration; and he made me love him, as I never did love more than two or three good men in all my life.

Well, an arrangement was made for a public discussion on the divine authority of the Bible between this good and godly man and me.

The discussion took place in the City Hall, Glasgow. The Colonel was so kind and gentlemanly, that I found my task exceedingly difficult. It was very unpleasant to speak lightly of the faith of so good and true a man; or to say anything calculated to hurt the feelings of one so guileless and so affectionate. And many a time I wished myself employed about some other business, or engaged in a contest with some other man. At the end of the second night's debate we were to rest two days, and the Colonel was so kind as to invite me, and even to press me, to spend those days with him at his residence near Ayr. The Colonel had given his good lady so favorable an account of my behaviour in the debate, that she wrote to me enforcing her good husband's invitation. I went. I could do no other. The Colonel and his venerable father met me at the station with a carriage, and I was soon in the midst of the Colonel's truly Christian and happy family. Neither the Colonel nor any of his household attempted to draw me into controversy. Not a word was spoken that was calculated to make me feel uneasy. There seemed no effort on the part of any one, yet every thing was said and done in such a way as to make me feel myself perfectly at home. Love, true Christian love, under the guidance of the highest culture, was the moving spirit in the Colonel's family circle. A visit to the birthplace of Burns, and to the banks of Bonny Doon, was proposed, and a most delightful stroll we had, made all the more pleasant by the Colonel's remarks on the various objects of interest that came in view, and his apt quotation of passages from the works of the poet, referring to the scenery amidst which we were moving.

On our return home I was made to feel at ease again with regard to every thing but myself. I felt sorry that I

Hosted by Google

should be at variance with my kind and accomplished host on a subject of so much interest and importance as religion and the Bible. The thought that on the evening of the coming day I should have to appear on the platform again as his opponent, was really annoying. To talk with such a man privately, in a free and friendly way, seemed proper enough; but to appear in public as his antagonist seemed too bad. When we started from Ayr to Glasgow in the same train, and in the same carriage, I felt as if I would much rather have travelled in some other direction, or on a different errand. But an agreement had been made, and it must be kept; so two more nights were spent in discussion. But it *was* discussion,—fair and friendly discussion,—and not quarrelling. Neither he nor I gave utterance to an unkind or reproachful word. When the discussion was over, the Colonel shook me by the hand in a most hearty manner in the presence of an excited audience, and presented me with a book as an expression of his respect and good feeling. I made the best returns I could, unwilling to be too much outdone by my gallant and Christian friend. The audience, divided as they were on matters of religion, after gazing some time on the spectacle presented on the platform, as if at loss what to do, or which of the disputants they should applaud, dropped their differences, and all united in applauding both, and the disputants and the audience separated with the heartiest demonstrations of satisfaction and mutual good-will. The events of those days, and the impression I received of my opponent's exalted character, never faded from my memory. And though they had not all the effect they ought to have had, their influence on my mind was truly salutary. I have never thought of Colonel Shaw and his good, kind, Christian family, without affection, gratitude, and delight. He wrote to me repeatedly after my return to America, and his letters, which reached us when we were living among the wilds of Nebraska, were among our pleasantest visitants, and must be reckoned among the means of my recovery from the horrors of unbelief.

I cannot doubt but that my encounter with this blessed man did much towards winning back my soul to God, and Christ, and the Church. This gracious man,—this child

Hosted by Google

of light and love,—is still living, and he continues, when I give him the opportunity, to testify his love for me, and his good wishes for my health and welfare. God bless his soul; and bless his household; and, after having given them a long and happy life on earth, receive them to His kingdom, to share together the riches of His love for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XVII.

CONTINUATION OF MY STORY. FRESH TROUBLES. A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER. HOW BROUGHT ABOUT. INCIDENTS. THE CHANGE COMPLETE AT LENGTH. ITS RESULTS.

In compliance with the request of some skeptical neighbours, I lectured against the Divine authority of the Bible in my first settlement in Ohio. Mr. Spofforth, a Methodist minister was induced to hold a public discussion with me on the subject, and as he was not well acquainted either with his own side of the question or the other, he was soon embarrassed and confounded, and obliged to retire from the contest. Not content with the retirement of my opponent, I announced another course of lectures on the Bible, resolved not to relinquish my hold of the people's attention, till I had laid before them my thoughts on the exciting subject at greater length. The company listened to me for a time with great patience, but while I was giving my last lecture, some young men set to work outside to pull down the log school-house in which I was speaking, and I and my friends had to make haste out before the lecture was over, to avoid being buried before we were dead.

The young men had provided themselves plentifully with rotten eggs, thinking to pelt me on my way home; but the night was very dark, and the way led through a tall, dense, shadowy forest, and somehow they mistook their own father for me, and gave *him* the eggs. When he got home he was as slimy and odoriferous as a man need to be; while I was perfectly clean and sweet.

Hosted by Google

But I was not to be permitted to escape in this way. During the night they pulled down the fences of my farm, and gave me other hints, that I must leave, or do worse. So I sold my farm for what I could get, and bought another some seventy miles away, near Salem, Columbiana County, a region occupied chiefly by what, in America, were called "*Come-outers*,"—people who had left the churches and the ministry, and even separated themselves from civil organizations, resolved to be subject to no authority but their own wills or their own whims. Among people so free as those, I thought I should have liberty plenty; but I soon found that they were so fond of freedom, that they wanted *my* share as well as their own, and I got into trouble once more. And then I saw that the greatest brawlers about liberty, when they come to be tried, are often the most arrant despots and tyrants on the face of the earth.

Then the people in the district were not *all* Come-outers. Some were Christians. And these I provoked by my disregard of the Sabbath, and by my advocacy of views unfriendly to religion and the divine authority of the Bible. I worked in my garden or on my farm on a Sunday, in sight of my neighbors as they went to church. I had previously called a Bible convention in the place, and taken the leading part in its proceedings. I took the skeptical side in a public discussion on Christianity in the town, and gave utterance to sentiments which pained the hearts of the religious portion of my neighbors beyond endurance. The consequence was, I got into trouble again, and had to move once more, or be undone.

So I moved once more. This time I resolved to make sure of a quiet home, so I went right away beyond the limits of the States, into the unpeopled territory of Nebraska, a country at that period ten or twelve times as large as Pennsylvania or England, and containing less than five thousand white inhabitants—an immense wilderness, occupied chiefly by tribes of red Indians, herds of buffalo and deer, countless multitudes of wolves, with here and there a bear, a panther, or a catamount, and heaps of rattlesnakes. And here I thought I should be safe. And so I was. The Indians gave me no trouble.

Hosted by Google

I always treated them kindly, and they were kind to me in return. As for the wild beasts, God has "put the fear and dread of man upon every beast of the earth;" and as he approaches, they retire. As a rule, the fiercest beasts of the forest will turn aside to make way for man. I have lived in the midst of multitudes of wolves, and taken no harm. I have slept on the open prairie in regions swarming with wolves, and never been disturbed. I have travelled by night in other parts of the country, over the wildest mountains, the homes of panthers, bears, and catamounts, and never been molested. The rattlesnakes were the most dangerous creatures. Yet even from them I took no harm. I have walked among them time after time in slippers or low shoes, yet I never was bitten. I slept once for three nights with a rattlesnake within two or three inches of my breast, yet escaped unhurt. God took care of me, when I neither took due care of myself, nor cared as I ought for Him.

The parties I feared the most were the white people. They had heard of me, and as they passed me in the street, they looked at me askance, regarding me apparently as a mystery or a monster. But I never shocked them by skeptical lectures, or by any other act of hostility to religion, so they bore with me, and came at length to treat me with respect and confidence. My wife and family were regarded with favor from the first. And I shall never forget the kindness of one of our Christian neighbors to my wife, in a time of affliction and sorrow.

And it is from my settlement in this desolate and far-off region, that I date the commencement of a change for the better in the state of my mind. I do not say that my opinions began to change, but the state of my *feelings* got better, which rendered possible a change for the better in my sentiments.

But I had reached a sad extreme. I had lost all trust in a Fatherly God, and all good hope of a better life. I had come near to the horrors of utter Atheism. And the universe had become an appalling and inexplicable mystery. And the world had come to be a dreary habitation; and life a weary affair; and many a time I wished I had never been born. And there were occasions when the dark

Hosted by Google

suggestion came, "Life is a burden; throw it down." But I said; "Nay; there are my wife and children: I will live for their sakes if for nothing else." And for their sakes I did live, thank God, till I had something else to live for.

If I were asked what first gave a check to my skepticism, and led me to turn my face once more towards Christ and Christianity, I should say, "The answer is supplied by my story." As I have shown, it was the troubled state of my mind,—the tempest of unhappy feeling, and the whirlwind of excitement in which I had lived so long,—that had most to do in carrying me away from Christ; and now my mind was allowed to be at rest. The whirlwind of excitement had spent its fury. The tempest in my soul had subsided, so that the principal hindrance to my return was gone. There were other causes that had contributed to the destruction of my faith in Christ and Christianity, but this was the first and chief one, and the one which gave the principal part of their force to the rest. As I have shown, I had been taught things about the Scriptures that were not correct. I had found a number of the arguments used by divines in support of the divinity of the Scriptures to be unsound. I had detected pious frauds in the writings of some of the advocates of the Bible and Christianity. I had met with untenable views on the inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures. I had, besides, adopted a defective method of reasoning on religious matters, which exerted an injurious influence on my mind. All these things, and many others which I cannot at present mention, had proved occasions of doubt and unbelief. But the probability is, that none of these things would have destroyed my faith in Christ, if I had been in a proper state of mind. There was nothing in them to justify unbelief to a mind unprejudiced, undistempered, calm. There was attractiveness enough in Christ, if the mists which passion had thrown around Him, to hide His worth and glory from my view, could be cleared away. And there was truth and goodness enough in Christianity, and there were evidences sufficient of its divinity, if one could have the films removed from one's eyes, and be permitted to behold it in its own sweet light. The great difficulty was

Hosted by Google

in the disordered state of my mind, and the trying nature of my situation. What was wanted, therefore, to make it possible for me to return to my former faith, was not so much an explanation of particular difficulties, as a better, happier, calmer state of mind. Explanations of difficulties *were* desirable, but they were not the first or principal things required. The great, the *one* thing needful, at the outset, was a fitting state of mind,—a mind sufficiently free from irritation, painful excitement, and consequent unhappy bias, to enable me to do justice to the religion of Christ. And the circumstances in which I was placed in Nebraska were calculated to bring me to this desirable state of mind; and many things which befel me there were calculated to stimulate my return to Christ.

1. In the first place, I was in a region favorable to calm and serious thought. True, we were infected for a time with the fever of speculation so prevalent in new countries; and we shared the hardships and toils, the cares and anxieties, of a border life: but there were seasons when serious thought and salutary reflection were inevitable. I was often alone amid the quiet and solemnity of a boundless wilderness. The busy world of men was far away. There was no one near to foster doubt or unbelief, or to reopen or irritate afresh the closing wounds inflicted by bigotry and intolerance in days gone by. And the loneliness of my condition seemed to bring me nearer to God. It allowed the revival of those Godward-tending instincts implanted in man's heart by the hand of the Creator. It favored the resurrection to life of the natural religious affections, and the revival of those holy longings and aspirations after a higher life and a grander destiny than earth can give, which arise so spontaneously in the breasts of men. It allowed the better self to rise and assert its power, while it shamed the evil self into the shade. And often, when away beyond the sight of man or of human habitation, amidst the eternal silence and the boundless solitude, I had strange thoughts and strange feelings; and there were times when, if I had yielded to the impulses from within, I should have cast myself down upon the ground, and adored the Great Mysterious Infinite.

On one occasion I went, in company with my youngest

Hosted by Google

son and a friend, some distance into the interior of the country. At one point we came upon a deserted and decaying Indian village, and then upon an Indian track across the desert. A little further on we struck a Mormon track, along which a company of the Latter-day saints had groped their way towards their promised Paradise in the Salt Lake Valley. As we followed the track we came upon a mound, and then upon another, marking the spots where worn-out travellers had ended their weary pilgrimages, and been consigned, amid the desolate wilds, to their final resting places. Into one of these unprotected graves the wolves had made their way, to feed upon the fallen victim of the new faith. When night came on it found us in these dreary and desolate wilds, and there we had to prepare to pass the night under the open sky, with multitudes of wolves around us. We had hardly spread our blankets when the sky was covered with black and heavy clouds, and lightnings flashed, and thunders roared, and everything betokened a night of storm and rain. We protected ourselves against the threatening elements as well as we could, and prepared ourselves for cold and drenching showers, and for a sleepless and troubled night, when, happily for us, the wind suddenly changed, and dissipated the clouds. The stars came out in all their glory, and the night was calm and bright, and all we had to try our patience was a little frost. And there I slept; and there I often awoke; and in my intervals of wakefulness I gazed on the magnificence of the outspread skies, and mused on the dreariness of the surrounding wilderness, and thought of the stirring scenes through which I had passed in days gone by, and of the strange and death-like silent one in which I then was placed. "And what will the future be?" said I. "And here is my son; in the spring of life; on adventures so strange; in a universe so vast and so mysterious; what will be his destiny? And what will be the destiny of the dear ones we have left behind?" And then I lost myself in a world of strange imaginings. When wearied with my restless musings, I sank to rest again, and passed from waking into sleeping dreams.

Morning broke at length, and we arose, and started on our journey. The deer were skipping gaily over the plains.

Hosted by Google

The wolves were hiding in their holes. We came at length to a stream. It was skirted by a grove, into which we made our way, and there we kindled a fire, and prepared our breakfast. We filled our coffee kettle from the brook. A hazel twig served us for a toasting fork; and we were soon engaged in one of the pleasantest parts of a hungry traveller's work. We relished our bread and ham and coffee amazingly. The wolves might be snuffing the odor of our viands, and coveting our repast; but they remained within their hiding-places, and kept silent; and we finished our meal in peace.

We rested next on the outskirts of a grove on the banks of the Elkhorn river. Here I was left to take care of the stuff, to prepare a bed, and to gather wood for a fire to cook our supper, and to frighten away the wolves, and keep us warm through the night. I gathered a quantity of dry and withered grass, and spread it on the ground, and covered it with a blanket, for a bed. I then looked around for wood. I saw some down in a dark deep gully, and went to fetch it; when I found myself all alone and unarmed in front of a hideous wolf-hole. I retreated with all the haste I could, and was soon on the top of the bank again, panting and trembling, and endeavoring to increase the distance between myself and the horrible den as rapidly as I could. I next looked round for wood on safer ground, and having collected a quantity, I waited with anxiety for the return of my companions. We slept that night in a half-built and deserted log cabin, without doors or windows, put up by some adventurous border-man to secure a claim to a portion of the surrounding land. A considerable part of the cabin was without roof. And there were large spaces between the layers of logs through which the frosty winds had free admission. For a time we deliberated whether we should be colder inside the cabin or outside. At length we decided in favor of the interior. We then took the wagon body off the frame and carried it into the cabin, and raised it on one side to screen us from the wind which came through the cabin walls. Against the wall at our head we fixed up rugs. At our feet, between our bed and the open doorway, we had our blazing fire. And there we slept. We had prickly sen-

Hosted by Google

sations in our eyes in the morning, but they soon passed away. We took no cold, or none that proved serious at all. And the wolves seemed to keep at a respectable distance.

As soon as we had got through our breakfast, and put our wagon and team in order, we started homewards. At one point, as we passed along, a wolf looked quietly down upon us from the side of a hill just by. A bigger one had passed us as we stood in front of the half-built cabin in which we had passed the night. The region abounded with them on every side.

While crossing a tract of rich bottom land, where the dry and withered grass of the previous summer lay thick, I struck a light, and for an experiment, set the prairie on fire. The flames blazed forth at once like gunpowder. They spread and roared. The wind rose, and blew the flames in the direction of our wagon. It was all we could do to get to the wagon and jump in and flee. We had no sooner started the horses than we found that the traces of one of them were loose, and we had to jump out again to fasten them; and before we could retake our places the flames were almost at our ears. The horses fled, however, at a good quick pace, and speedily carried us beyond the reach of danger, and we got safe home.

2. There were many things in my new situation and in my strange way of life, besides the silence and the solitude of a boundless desert, that were calculated to awaken within me solemn feeling, and to rouse me to serious thoughtfulness on things pertaining to God and religion. And when once my mind had begun to awake to such matters, it was never permitted to sink again, for any length of time, into its former death-like slumber. And many things befel me that tended to make me feel, and feel most painfully at times, the helplessness and cheerlessness, the gloom and wretchedness, of the man who has lost his trust in God, and his hope of a blessed immortality. There is nothing in utter doubt and unbelief to satisfy a man with a heart. A man with a heart wants a Father in whose bosom he can repose, a Saviour in whose care and sympathy he can trust, and a better world to which he can look forward as his final home and resting-place, and as the eternal home and resting-place of those who are dear

Hosted by Google

to him. And I *had* a heart. I was not made for infidelity. I never submitted to it willingly, and I never sat easy under its power. I had affections, cravings, wants, which nothing but religion could satisfy.

3. Then trouble came. Infidelity is a wretched affair even in prosperity; but in adversity it is still worse. And adversity overtook me. In the spring of 1857 we had a reasonable income, from property which we supposed to be of considerable value. A few weeks later a panic came, and our income fell to nothing; our property was valueless; instead of a support it became a burden, and we had to set to work to get a living by our labor, at a time when work was hard to be got, and when wages were down at the lowest point. This was a time of great distress and grievous trial, and I felt the want of consolation most keenly. I could once have said, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be on the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation." But now I *had* no God. The universe had no great Fatherly Ruler. The affairs of man were governed by chance, or by a harsh and grinding necessity; and all good ground of hope and cheerful trust had given place to doubt, and gloom, and cruel uncertainty.

4. Trials of other kinds came. Sickness and pain entered our dwelling, and seized upon one of my family. My youngest son was taken ill. He was racked with excruciating pain. It seemed as if the agony would drive him to distraction, or cut short his days. And there I stood, watching his agony, and distracted with his cries, unable to utter a whisper about a gracious Providence, or to offer up a prayer for help or deliverance.

5. Another dear one was afflicted; and again my heart was torn, and again my lips were sealed. I could not even say to the suffering one, "God bless you."

6. I was called to attend the funeral of a child. The parents were in great distress, and I was anxious to speak to them a word of comfort; but doubt and unbelief had left me no such word to speak. I remembered the day

Hosted by Google

when I could have said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

"They rest in Jesus, and are blest,
How sweet their slumbers are."

But the happy day was gone, and I was dumb in the presence of the mourners.

7. I was called, on another occasion, to visit a friend, a brother skeptic, who was sick and likely to die. I had often visited him when he was well, and we had managed, on those occasions, to interest or amuse each other; but now we were helpless. Both were in sorrow, and neither could console his brother. And there we were, looking mournfully on each other in the face of death, speechless and comfortless. I am horrified when I think of the dreadful position in which I was placed on those solemn occasions. It seemed to me as if I had been enchanted all those dreary days by some malignant demon, and made the sport of his infernal cruelty. My friend, like myself, had been a Christian in his earlier days, and had rejoiced in the assurance of God's love and favor, and in hopes of future and eternal blessedness; and now he was passing away in utter cheerlessness and hopelessness. He died, and I followed his remains to the grave. I spoke; but I had no great comforting truths with which to cheer the sad hearts of his weeping kindred. I looked down, with his disconsolate widow, and his sorrowing children, into the dark cold vault, but could say not a single word of a better life. We sorrowed as those who have no hope.

8. While I was in Nebraska my mother died. Like my father, who had died some years before, she had been a Christian from her early days; a very happy one; and she continued a Christian to the last. She was one of the most affectionate and devoted mothers that ever lived. She had eleven children. The eldest one died when he was twenty-one, after having spent a number of years, young as he was, as an able and useful minister of Christ. He died a happy death. The remaining ten were all permitted to grow up to manhood and womanhood, and my mother had the happiness at one time, an unspeakable happiness to her, to see them all, with one exception, devoted to the service

Hosted by Google

of God, and several of them engaged as preachers of the Gospel. They were joyful days to her when she could get them all together, as she sometimes did, to sing with her the sweet hymns of praise and gratitude, of hope and rapture, which had cheered her so often during the years of her pilgrimage. And now she was gone. I had seen her some years before when on a visit to my native land. She knew of my skeptical tendencies, and though she had faith in my desire to be right, she was afraid lest I should miss my way, and entreated me with all the affectionate tenderness of an anxious mother, not to allow myself to be carried away from the faith and hope of the Gospel. "Do pray, my dear son," she said,—"Do pray that God may lead you in the right path. I want to meet you all in heaven. It would be a dreadful thing if any of you should be found wanting at last. Don't forsake God. Don't leave Christ. Religion is a reality; a blessed reality. I know it, I feel it, my dear son. It is the pearl of great price." These were the last words I heard from her lips. I listened to them in silence. Though I was too far gone to be able to sympathize with her remarks as much as I ought, I was wishful that she should enjoy all the comfort that her faith could give her. She wept; she prayed for me; she kissed me; and I left her, to see her face no more on earth. I returned to my home in America, and the next thing I heard of the dear good creature was, that she had finished her course. I kept the sad intelligence to myself, for my heart was too full to allow me to speak of my loss, even to those who were nearest and dearest to me. I thought of all her love for me from my earliest days; and of all her labors and sacrifices for my comfort and welfare. I remembered her counsels and her warnings. I remembered her last kind words, her kiss, her prayers, her tears. It seems dreadful; but unbelief had so chilled my soul, that I could no longer indulge the sweet thought of an immortal life even for the soul of my dear good Christian mother. I had once had visions of a land of rest, a paradise of bliss, and countless crowds of happy souls, and rapturous songs, and shouts of praise, and joyous meetings of loving and long parted friends in realms of endless life and boundless blessedness; but all were gone. A sullen gloom, a deathlike stupor,

Hosted by Google

a horrible and unnatural paralysis of hope had come in place of those sweet visions of celestial glories. My only comfort was, that though I had ceased to believe in the divinity of Christianity myself, *she* had retained her faith, and had lived and died in the enjoyment of its consolations.

9. We had a young woman that had lived with us, with the exception of two short intervals, all the time we had been in America. She had come to regard us as her natural guardians, and we had come to look on her as one of our family. The second time she left us she caught a fever, and returned to us in hopes that in her old and quiet home she would soon be well again. We procured her medical aid, but the fever got worse. The doctor lost hopes, and it soon began to be evident, that she was doomed to a speedy death. I attended her during the last sad night of her sufferings. I heard her moanings as her life drew slowly towards a close. I wanted to comfort her, but I had lost the power. I could once have spoken to her of a Father in heaven, and of a better world; but I could speak on those subjects no longer. I could once have kneeled by her side and prayed; but I could pray no more. I could neither comfort myself nor my dying charge. She passed away without a word of consolation or a whisper of hope to cheer her as she trod the dark valley of the shadow of death. I stood by, afflicted and comfortless, when her lifeless form was committed to its final resting-place, unable to speak a word of hope or consolation to the sorrowing minds that were gathered around her grave. She was interred on the slope of the hill, on the opposite side of the stream over against my farm, within view of the field and the garden in which I often worked, and the lonely dwelling in which I frequently slept. And there she lay, far from her kindred and her native land, the wild winds moaning over her solitary grave, and no sweet word about God, or Christ, or a better life, to mark the spot where she slept. And there, on that quiet farm, and in that solitary dwelling, with that one melancholy grave in view, I passed at times the long sad days, and the still and solemn nights, in utter loneliness, gazing on the desolate scenes around, or feeding on saddening thoughts within, "without hope

Hosted by Google

and without God in the world." I sought for comfort in a Godless and Christless philosophy, but sought in vain. I tried to extort from nature some word of consolation, but not a whisper could I obtain. I tried to forge some theory of my own that might lessen the gloom in which I was wrapt; but my efforts were fruitless. The light of life was quenched; the joy, the bliss of being was no more. I had "forsaken the fountain of living waters," and nothing remained but broken cisterns that could hold no water. I was wretched; and, apart from God, and Christ, and immortality, my wretchedness was incurable; and the sense of my wretchedness prepared me, and ultimately constrained me, to look once more in the direction of the religion that had cheered me in my earlier days.

10. I had a great and grievous trial of another kind while in Nebraska. When we removed to that far-off country, we left our eldest son in Ohio to look after our interests there, and to send off to us what goods we might require in our new home. The river Ohio, down which our goods had to be sent, was low at the time, and the steamer on which they were placed, while racing recklessly with another steamer, struck on a rock and was wrecked. There were over a thousand volumes of my books on board, the best and principal part of my library; nearly all my manuscripts too were on board, and much other property, amounting in value to twelve or thirteen hundred pounds; over $6,000; and nearly all was lost, or irreparably damaged.

This however was but a light part of the trial. As soon as my eldest son got news of the wreck, he hastened to the spot, to save what portions of our property he could. The weather was hot by day, and cold by night. Both the season and the place were unhealthy, and by his great anxiety, and excessive labors, and continual exposure, he brought on a violent fever. The first information we received about the matter was that he was dying. When the dreadful tidings reached us we were more than a thousand miles away. I started at once for Ohio, and made what haste I could to reach my son; but go what way I would, I must be four or five long days on the road, and four or five long nights. I took my way down the river.

Hosted by Google

For four long days and four long dreary nights I travelled, in doubt all the time whether my child was dead or alive. And all that time I was unable to offer up a prayer, either for my son, myself, or the anxious and sorrowing ones I had left behind. Nor could I apply to myself a single consolatory promise of Scripture. My mad antichristian philosophy had robbed me of all. God and His Providence, Christ and His sympathy, heaven and its blessedness, were all gone, and nothing was left but the hard blank horrors of inexorable fate. My soul was shut up as in a dungeon, unable to help itself. It was stretched on a rack, and tortured with excruciating pain. Those four long dreary days and nights were the darkest and most miserable I ever passed. But God was merciful. I lived to reach the end of my dreadful journey, and He had spared my son. We embraced,—we wept. We were spared—the whole of our family were spared, thank God—for better days, and for a happier lot.

11. There were other events which befell me while I was in Nebraska, that had a salutary influence on my mind. I was frequently in the greatest danger, and was as frequently preserved from harm. As I have said, I slept three nights with a rattlesnake within three inches of my breast. My eldest son slept repeatedly in the same terrible position; yet we both escaped unhurt. Once I was within an inch—within a hair's breadth, I may say—of being killed by the kick of a horse. On another occasion, when my eldest son was forking hay in the field, and I was piling it on the wagon, he heard a rattlesnake, and looked all round upon the ground to find it, with a view to kill it, but looked in vain. At length, turning his eyes upwards, he saw it writhing and wriggling on one of the prongs of his hayfork, which he was holding up in the air. He had pierced the deadly creature while forking the hay, and I had taken the hay from the fork with my naked hands, and escaped unbitten. I had quite a multitude of escapes from deadly peril, some more remarkable than those I have described. And there were times when the thoughts of those wonderful deliverances made me feel, that there were far more incredible doctrines than that of a watchful and gracious Providence.

Hosted by Google

12. Again. When I commenced my career of religious exploration, I expected I should get rid of all difficulties, and that I should reach a region at last where all would be light; where there would be no more harassing or perplexing mysteries. For a time my hopes appeared to get realized. The doctrines of Calvinism I threw away in mass, and thus got rid of the difficulties connected with predestination, election and reprobation. The difficulties connected with infinite and absolute fore-knowledge I got rid of by modifying and limiting the doctrine. Many theological difficulties appeared to arise, not from the doctrines of Scripture, but from anti-christian fictions, and false theories of Scripture doctrines. These I set aside without much ceremony. But when one difficulty was disposed of, another made its appearance, and in some cases several. And when I got outside the religion of Christ, more difficulties than ever made their appearance, and difficulties often of a more appalling character. The doctrine of predestination came back in the shape of fate or necesity. All the great difficulties of theology had ugly likenesses in infidel philosophy. Instead of reaching a region of unsullied light, I got into one of clouds and darkness. And the further I wandered, the blacker the clouds became, and the thicker the darkness. The difficulties, the perplexities, on the side of unbelief, were more distressing and embarrassing than those I had encountered on the side of Christianity.

13. Again. I was frequently tried by the characters of unbelievers. I had read and believed that many of the older unbelievers had been immoral; but I supposed that modern unbelievers were a better class. I had seen a number of statements to that effect in books and newspapers, some of them proceeding from Christians, and even from Christian ministers. I was disposed to believe that even the older infidels had not been so bad as represented. I knew that *I* had been belied, and I considered it probable that all who had had quarrels or controversies with members of the priesthood, had been belied in like manner. I believed for a long time, that the loss of faith in the supernatural origin of Christianity and the Bible, had made me better, in some respects, instead of worse. I

Hosted by Google

thought no changes had taken place in my character, but what, on the whole, were improvements. For years after I became an unbeliever, I endeavored to practise all the unquestionable virtues inculcated in the Bible, and I was disposed to believe that modern unbelievers generally did the same. And when I lectured against the Divine authority of the Bible, I disclaimed, as I have already said, all sympathy with those who rejected the Bible because it discountenanced vice. And such was the violence of my anti-religious fanaticism, that I had actually come at one time to believe that infidelity, in connection with natural science, was more friendly to virtue than Christianity.

But my faith in this view met with many rude shocks after I had been some time in America. Often when I came to be acquainted with the men who invited me to lecture, I was ashamed to be seen standing with them in the streets; and I shrank from the touch of their hand as from pollution. And many a time when I had associated with persons for a length of time, thinking them above suspicion, I was amazed to find, at length, that they looked on vicious indulgence as harmless, and were astonished that any man who had lost his faith in Christianity, should have scruples with regard to fornication or adultery. Though these painful discoveries did not at once convince me that infidelity was wrong, and Christianity right, they were not without effect. They lessened my respect for the infidel philosophy, and prepared the way for my return to Christ. In England, where I expected on my return, to find unbelievers better, I found them worse. I supposed that the Secularists thought as I did with regard to virtue. I thought their object was to advance the temporal interests of mankind, and never dreamt but that they regarded virtue as the greatest of those interests. And when I found first one and then another to be dishonest, drunken, licentious, I was disposed to regard them as exceptions to the general rule. To the last; nay, for some time after my entire separation from the party, I supposed the profligate, unprincipled, abandoned ones to be the few, and the honest and virtuous ones to be the many. And when at length I was convinced past doubt of my mistake, the effect was terribly painful. But it was salutary. It went far

Hosted by Google

towards convincing me, that whether religion was founded in truth or not, it was necessary to the virtue and happiness of mankind. It prepared me and inclined me still further to return to Christ, and brought me a step or two nearer to His side.

14. Then again, the influences of my family were strongly in my favor. I had a wife that always loved me, and that never ceased to pray. And I had children that grew up believers, to a great extent, under the shadow of my unbelief. They had suffered, as I have already said, from the cruel treatment to which they had seen their father subjected: they had been awfully prejudiced against certain classes of ministers, if not against ministers generally; but now their prejudices were well nigh gone. And they had never been embittered against Christianity. And now they had come to feel strongly in its favor, and to look on skepticism both as a great error, and a terrible calamity. My youngest son was something of a genius. He was a clever mathematician, and an acute logician. And he would say to me sometimes, when he heard me uttering antichristian sentiments, "Father, I think you are wrong. I am sure you are wrong on that point; and if you will listen to me I think I can convince you that you are." And I did listen. I had long been accustomed to regard my children more as friends and companions, than as inferiors, and to encourage them to speak to me with all freedom. And they were kind and considerate enough as a rule to use the liberty I gave them without abusing it; so I hearkened to their remarks and remonstrances. And there were occasions on which the logic of the child proved mightier than the logic of the father—there were cases in which the father learned lessons of truth, from those whom he ought to have instructed. My eldest son, if not so powerful in logic, was surpassed by none in goodness and tenderness; and if his brother excelled him in acuteness and caution, no one could excel him in devout and passionate longings for his father's return to Christ. And both these sons, and the whole of my family, exerted an influence, which tended first to check the extravagances of my skepticism, and then to help and hasten my return to the truth as it is in Jesus.

Hosted by Google

My sons assisted me in more ways than one. They were more observant of men than I was, and they were better judges of character. And they had better opportunities than I had, of learning what the infidels with whom they came in contact, really were, both in their principles and way of life. And they were readier to receive the truth on the subject than I. The consequence was, that both in America and in England, they gathered up a multitude of facts that I should have passed unnoticed; and were prepared to use them for my benefit, when the proper time should come. And the proper time did come at length. I could believe nothing against parties with whom I was connected, on any one's testimony, till I had begun myself to detect their misdoings. My wife and children knew this, so they never troubled me with *their* discoveries, till I had myself begun to make similar discoveries. As soon as they found I had seen enough to shake my confidence in a number of the unbelievers—as soon as they found that I had got rid of my mad prejudices in favor of the parties, and had so far come to myself as to have obtained the use of my eyes and understanding, they knew that the time for making known to me *their* discoveries had come. And they made them known. And they agreed so perfectly with what I myself had seen and proved, that I could no longer discredit their statements. And they explained a multitude of other matters. Thus another blow was struck, both at my faith in skeptics, and my faith in skepticism.

And both my wife and children had, on the whole, wonderful patience with me in my tardy movements towards the truth. When I consider how much of evil they saw in connexion with infidelity, and how strong their feeling was of the truth and necessity of religion, I wonder at their forbearance. At times their patience was well-nigh exhausted, but they seldom betrayed the fact by their behavior. But my eldest son informed me, after my return to Christ, that at one time, doubting whether I should ever be cured of my insanity, he made up his mind to forswear all other occupations, and give himself exclusively to the Christian ministry, that he might spend his life and powers in a ceaseless warfare against the horrible delusions to which I seemed so irretrievably wedded.

Hosted by Google

15. In the year 1857, towards the close of the summer, I left my home in Nebraska for a time, and went eastward on a lecturing tour. My first appointment was at East Liverpool, in Ohio. There I met with my good old friend John Donaldson, of Byker, near Newcastle-on Tyne, England. He spoke of days long past, when we worked together in the cause of Christ. He was kind, as he had always been; but it troubled him to find me so changed—so far estranged from the views of former times. Though glad to see my friend, the memories which his presence revived, of the days when I was a happy and a useful minister of Christ, and the partial re-awakening of old religious thoughts and feelings which it occasioned, made me feel, for a moment, an indescribable sensation, as of one who had got an unlooked-for glimpse of some fearful loss he had sustained, or of some tremendous mistake he had committed. My infidel logic, however, hastened to my aid, and assured me I was right; but the deep and deathless instincts of my soul were not entirely at rest.

I reached Philadelphia at length. There I was engaged by Dr. W. Wright for eight months. I lectured every Sunday, sometimes on theological, sometimes on moral, and sometimes on scientific and general subjects. I always urged on my hearers a virtuous life, and did what I could to escape the society of persons of immoral habits. And I thought, for a time, I had succeeded. But I was grievously mistaken. One of the acting men in my congregation was a Plymouth man. He, as I afterwards found, had deserted his wife and family, and was living with another woman. Another, a more important member of my congregation, whom I supposed to be an example of propriety, turned out to be an advocate of unlimited license. And another, a man of great wealth, who had often invited me to his house, and shown me kindness in other ways, I found, after his death, had never been married to the person with whom he had lived as his wife. I also found that he had another family in another part of the city. I mention these unpleasant matters to show, that facts were not wanting to shake my faith in the moral influence of infidel principles. The gentleman by whom I was employed, treated me with great respect and kindness,

Hosted by Google

and some of my congregation did what they could to make me comfortable; but the longer I remained in my position, the less encouragement I saw to expect infidelity or skepticism to produce a virtuous and honorable life.

The gentleman by whom I was employed had thought of expending some fifty thousand dollars in building a hall, and endowing a lecture, &c., for the propagation of infidel principles; but the conduct of the skeptics that gathered round him, soon cured him of his anti-christian zeal.

16. Before my term was quite expired, I was engaged by another gentleman for eight months. But I had seen so much to shake my faith in the beneficent tendency of infidelity, that this time I left myself free, both to lecture on what subjects I thought best, and to leave my situation on two months' notice. As my new engagement did not commence for three months or more, I had the happiness of spending some time in the bosom of my family. As usual, the influences to which I was subject there were all calculated to abate my faith in irreligious principles, and to dispose me to look with less disfavor and prejudice on Christianity. In August I started again for Philadelphia. I left my family with sadness and tears, and I proceeded on my journey with a feeling that it would not be long before my labors in Philadelphia would come to an end. And the feeling grew stronger every week. The Hebrews had a hard task when they were required to make bricks without straw; but he who undertakes to make people good without religion, has to make bricks without clay —and that is a vast deal harder. I felt my position was not the right one, and I longed and sighed for something more in accordance with my gradually changing views and better feelings; but knew not exactly what it was I needed, or where it was to be found. I frequently attended the ministry of Dr. Furness, the Unitarian minister; and though his preaching was far from being all it should be, his sermons had a salutary effect on my mind. His words about God and duty, about Christ and immortality, fell on my soul at times like refreshing dew. I also went to hear the Rev. Albert Barnes, and was both pleased and surprised with the truth and excellence of many of his remarks. I heard several other ministers, but the irra-

Hosted by Google

tional and anti-christian doctrines set forth by some of them, exerted an influence on my mind which was the opposite of salutary.

At the end of two months I gave notice to my committee that I should give up my situation as lecturer. I had come to the conclusion, that to war with Christianity was not the way to promote the virtue and happiness of mankind, and I told my congregation so. I added, that if we were even sure that the sentiments entertained by Christians were erroneous, it would be well to refrain from assailing them, till we had something better to put in their place. And I also advised them, now they were about to be left without a lecturer, to go to some place of worship; and if they could not hear exactly what they could like, to make the best of what they did hear, and by all means to live a virtuous, honorable, and useful life. I gave similar advice to congregations in other places, and by many it was well received.

When I gave up my situation in Philadelphia, my intention was to return to England. I was anxious to free myself, as far as possible, from men of extreme views, whether in religion or politics, and to place myself in a position in which I should be perfectly free to pursue whatever course a regard to truth and duty might require. I made up my mind, therefore, that on my arrival in England, I would stand alone, apart from all societies and public men, and have a paper of my own, and publish from time to time whatever might commend itself to my judgment as true and good. I knew I had changed during the last two years, though I did not know how much; and I believed I was changing, though I could not tell in what the change which was taking place would end. I had no idea that I could ever become a Christian again, though the tendency of the change which was taking place in me was in that direction.

Having taken leave of my friends, I hastened to Boston, and prepared for my voyage across the deep. I was to sail by the Royal Mail Steamship *Canada*, on the eleventh of January, 1860. Just as I was stepping on board the packet, I received a letter from my youngest son. Among a number of other kind things, it contained words like the

Hosted by Google

following: "Father, dear, when you get to England, don't dream that by any breath of yours, or by any paper balls that you can fire, you can ever shatter or shake the eternal foundations on which Christianity rests." Words like these from a dear good son could not but have a powerful effect on my mind.

And now I started on my voyage. I had never ventured on the sea before without dread of shipwreck and drowning. This time I had no such fear. On the contrary, as the vessel threaded her way among the rocks and islands of Boston Harbor, I experienced a strange and unaccountable elevation of soul. I had not felt so cheerful, so hopeful, so happy, for many years. And this delightful joyousness of soul continued during the whole of the voyage. Yet I had never gone to sea at so dangerous a season. And I never encountered such fearful and long-continued storms. Before we had fairly lost sight of the last point of land, the winds, which were already raging with unusual violence, began to blow more furiously. They fell on us in the most fearful blasts, and roared around us in a deafening howl. The sea was thrown into the wildest uproar. The vessel was tossed and tumbled about in the most merciless manner. One moment she was plunging head foremost into the deep; the next she was climbing the most stupendous waves. Now her right wheel was vainly laboring deep in the water, while her left was spinning uselessly in the air; then her right wheel was whirling in the air, while her left was splurging in the deep. Sometimes the waves swept over the vessel, while at other times they would strike her so rudely on the side, that she staggered through all her timbers. After the storm had raged for two or three days, there came what are called white squalls. A light grey cloud appears in the distance, and as it approaches you, it sends forth lightnings, accompanied with hurried bursts of thunder. A furious storm of hail or snow immediately follows. The howl of the tempest rises to a yell, and the squall, as it sweeps along in its fury, cuts off the tops of the waves, and scatters them in foam over the surface of the deep like a mantle of snow. The first of those squalls went right through our large square sail, tearing it to shreds. Another sent a wave on

Hosted by Google

board which snapped in pieces stanchions of wrought iron thicker than my arms, and carried away one of our best boats. And this unspeakable uproar of the elements continued for several days. At times I crept on deck for a few moments, and, holding by the rigging, gazed on the wild magnificence of the appalling scene. And all this time my heart, instead of being tortured with its customary fears, was full of a cheerful joyous confidence. It was as if some spirit of heaven had taken possession of my soul to give me sweet presentiments of the approach of better days. And so perhaps it was. I was moving onwards, though I knew it not, to a happier destiny, and the peace and joy I felt were as the dawn or twilight of the coming day of my redemption.

We reached Liverpool at length, and I was soon at Betley, the native place of my wife, which was to be my temporary home. And now, if I had fallen into good hands, or if the better thoughts and tendencies of my soul had been sufficiently strong, I might have entered at once on a happier course. But I encountered an unlooked-for difficulty. As I have said, my intention was, on landing in England, to begin a periodical, and to keep apart from persons of extravagant views. I was not a Christian, nor did I, at the time, suppose I should ever become one; but I was an earnest moralist, and I had become more moderate in my ideas both on religious and political subjects. And I was, to some extent, prepared to receive fresh light. I had got an impression,—I had had it for some time before I left America,—that my mind was not in a thoroughly healthy state,—that it was not exactly itself,—that it was so much biassed in favor of irreligion, that it was incapable of doing justice to arguments for a God and Providence, for a spiritual world and a future life. I partly believed, and now I know, that facts and arguments in favor of the great fundamental doctrines of religion, did not affect and influence me so much as they ought,—that my doubts and disbeliefs were stronger than facts or the nature of things warranted. I suspected, what now I regard as past doubt, that erroneous principles, and a defective method of reasoning, and long practice in searching out flaws in arguments, and detecting and exposing errors and pious frauds,

Hosted by Google

had disposed me too strongly to distrust and disbelief,—that I was in fact a slave to bad habits of thought and reasoning, as really as the inveterate drunkard is the slave to his irrational appetite for strong drink. What I should believe in case the freedom of my mind and the just and harmonious action of its powers were fully restored, I could not tell; but I had a strong impression, amounting to something like an assurance, that I should believe more than I did with respect to God and a spiritual world. Had I, on arriving in England, found myself in favorable circumstances, my mind might quickly have recovered its freedom, and returned, in part at least, to the faith of its earlier days. But this was not my lot. I was beset with new temptations, and was doomed to further disappointments.

The Secularists had got out a prospectus of a new paper, and I was urged to become one of the editors; and thinking that it would seem mean and selfish to begin a paper of my own under such circumstances, I reluctantly consented. I however stipulated for full control over one half of the paper, and when I found that articles of a disgraceful and mischievous tendency were published in the other half, I published a special notice in mine, every week, that I was not answerable for those articles.

In August 1860 my wife and children arrived in England. They were sorry to find me in connection with that paper and with the party which it represented; and they set themselves at once to work to bring about a change; and it was not long before they succeeded. A book, written by a leading Secularist, was sent to me for review. When I read it, I found that its object was to undermine marriage and bring it into disrepute, and to induce men and women to abandon honorable wedlock, and to substitute for it unbounded sensual license. It was the filthiest, the most horrible and revolting production I had ever read. This loathsome book had already been advertised in the paper of which I was one of the editors, and in the part of the paper over which I had no control, it had been strongly recommended. I found, too, that it had been very extensively circulated among the readers of the paper, and that the Secularist leaders were adopting measures to

Hosted by Google

promote its still more extensive circulation. I at once exposed the villanous production in my portion of the paper. As far as a respect for decency would permit, I laid its loathsome and horrible abominations before my readers. This led to an instant, a total, and final separation between me and the friends of the licentious book.

I now commenced a Paper of my own, and I said to myself, and I said to my children: "I will now re-read the Bible; I will examine Christianity; I will review the history of the Church; I will examine the character and workings of the various religious organizations of the day; and whatever I find in them that is true or good, I will lay before my readers. I am not a Christian," said I; "and I never expect to be one; but I will do justice to the Christian cause to the best of my ability. I have said and written enough on the skeptical side: I will see what there is to be said on the Christian side."

I had no idea of the greatness of the task I was undertaking. I supposed that ten or a dozen articles would be sufficient to set forth all that was true and good in the Bible. But when I came to examine the Book, with my somewhat altered views, and enlarged experience, and chastened feelings, I found in it treasures of truth and goodness, of beauty and blessedness, of which, even in my better days, I seemed to have had but a very inadequate conception. I was touched with a hundred precepts of mercy and tenderness in the laws of Moses. I was startled and delighted with many Old Testament stories. The character of Job, as portrayed in the twenty-ninth and thirty-first chapters of the book that goes under his name, melted me to tears. I was delighted with the purity and tenderness, the beauty and sublimity of the Psalms. I was amazed at the depth and vastness of the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs. I was pleased with the stern fidelity with which the prophets rebuked the vices and the crimes, the selfishness and cruelty, of the sinners of their days, and the tenderness and devotion with which they pleaded the cause of the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. When I came to the Gospels, and read again the wonderful story of the Man of Nazareth, my whole soul gave way. The beauty, the tenderness, the glory of His character over-

Hosted by Google

powered me. I was ashamed that I should ever have so fearfully misconceived it, and done it such grievous injustice. The tears rolled from my eyes, moistening the book in which I was reading, and the paper on which I was writing. But I proceeded with my task. I pondered every word He uttered, and was delighted with His glorious revelations of God, and truth, and duty. I gazed on all His wondrous works. I marked, I studied, every trait in his character. I read the sad story of His trials. I traced him through all His sufferings. I saw the indignities and cruelties to which He was subjected, and I saw the meekness, the patience, and the fortitude with which He suffered. I saw Him on the cross. I heard the prayer which He offered in the midst of His agonies in behalf of His murderers, 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' And still I read, and still I gazed, and still I listened. I was entranced. I had thought to stand at a distance; to look at Jesus with the eye of a philosopher and moralist only, and calmly and coolly to take His portrait; but I was overpowered. The strange, the touching sight drew me nearer. The loving one got hold of me. His infinite tenderness, His transcendent goodness, the glory of His whole character, and life, and doctrine took me captive; and I was no way loth to be held by such charms. He had won me entirely. I loved Him with all my heart and soul. I was His,—His disciple, His servant, entirely, and forever. And I wanted no other treasure but to share His love, and no other employment but to share His work. I was, though but very imperfectly enlightened on many things, and exceedingly weak and imperfect in many respects, most blessedly and indissolubly wedded to Christ and His cause.

I drew the portrait of the Saviour to the best of my ability, and sent the articles to the press. It fell to the lot of my children, in correcting the press, to read those articles. And when they read them, they too wept, and one said to another, "Father is coming right; he will be himself again by and by." And they were right in thinking so. I had come in contact with the Great Healer. I had got a sight of One on whom it is impossible to look steadfastly and long without experiencing a thorough

Hosted by Google

transformation of soul. And so it was with me. From my first look I became less and less of a skeptic, and more and more of a believer in Christianity, till my transformation was complete.

The more I read the Bible with my altered feelings and change of purpose, the more was I impressed with its transcendent worth, and the more was I influenced by its renovating power. I saw that whatever might be said with regard to particular portions of the Book, it was, as a whole, the grandest revelation of truth and duty that the mind of man could conceive. I could no longer find in my heart to talk or write about what appeared to be its imperfections. There were passages that seemed dark or doubtful: there were some that seemed erroneous or contradictory; but they amounted to nothing. They did not affect the scope, the drift, the aim, the tendency of the Book as a whole. They might not be consistent with certain erroneous theories of inspiration, or with certain unguarded statements of extravagant theologians; but they were consistent with the belief that the book, as a whole, was worthy of the Great Good being from whom it was said to have come, and adapted to the illumination and salvation of the race to which it had been given. Christianity began to present itself to my mind as the truest philosophy; as the perfection of all wisdom and goodness. While it met man's spiritual wants, and cheered him with the promise of eternal bliss, it was manifestly its tendency to promote his highest interests even in the present world. As the clouds that had darkened my mind passed away, it become plain as the light, that if mankind could be brought to receive its teachings, and to live in accordance with its principles, the world would become a paradise.

2. I reviewed Church History. While under the influence of anti-Christian views and feelings, I had read the history of the Church and Christianity with a view to justify my unbelief, rather than with a desire to know the simple truth. I had looked more for facts which could be used to damage the Church, than for fair full views of things. My mind had dwelt particularly on the Church's quarrels, its divisions, its intolerance, and its wars;—on the favor which the clergy had sometimes shown to slavery

Hosted by Google

and to despotism;—on their asceticisms, fanaticisms, and follies; and on cases of fraud, and selfishness, and impurity. I had read as an advocate retained to plead the cause of unbelief, rather than as a candid judge, or an unbiassed student, anxious to know and teach the whole truth. I was not conscious of my unfairness at the time, but I now began to see that I had been influenced by my irreligious passions and prejudices. I saw, on looking over my Guizot for instance, that I had marked the passages which contained matters not creditable to the clergy, and passed unnoticed those portions of the work which set forth the services which the Church and Christianity had rendered to civilization. I also remembered how eagerly I had swallowed the unfair representations and fallacious reasonings of Buckle with regard to Christianity and skepticism, and how impatiently I had hurried over what reviewers friendly to Christianity said on the other side of the subject. The balance of my mind was at length restored. I now saw that Christianity had proved itself the friend of peace and freedom, of learning and science, of trade and agriculture, of temperance and purity, of justice and charity, of domestic comfort and national prosperity. The history of Christianity was the history of our superior laws, of our improved manners, of our beneficent institutions, of our schools of learning, of our boundless wealth, of our constitutional governments, of our unequalled literature, of our world-wide influence, of our domestic happiness, and of all that goes to make up our highest forms of civilization. Imperfectly as it had been understood, and defectively as it had been reduced to practice, Christianity had placed the nations of Europe at the head of the human race. Christian nations were the most enlightened and virtuous, the most prosperous and powerful, the most free and happy of all the nations of the earth. The pious frauds, the intolerance and persecutions, the oppressions and wrongs, the selfishness and sin, which were found in the history of the Church, were not the effects of Christianity, but the effects of passions and principles directly opposed to its spirit and teachings.

3. I looked at the Churches of the day. I found them all at work for the education of the young, and for the in-

Hosted by Google

struction and salvation of the world. I saw them building schools and chapels, and supplying them with teachers and preachers. I saw them printing books, and tracts, and Bibles, and spreading them abroad in all directions. I saw them founding libraries and reading-rooms, and young men's Christian associations, and ladies' sewing societies. I saw them sending out missionaries abroad, and carrying on a multitude of beneficent operations at home. I asked for the schools and libraries, the books and periodicals, the halls of science and the missionary operations of the enemies of Christianity; but they were nowhere to be found. They *talked* about education, but instructed no one. They talked about science, but did nothing for its spread or its advancement. They abused Christians for neglecting men's temporal interests, but did nothing to promote men's earthly happiness themselves. They found fault with Sunday-schools, and talked of the faults of Christians, but never corrected their own. They talked of liberty, and practised tyranny. They complained of intolerance, yet followed such as renounced their society, or questioned their views, with the bitterest reproaches, and the most heartless persecution. They talked of reform, but sowed the seeds of rebellion, anarchy, and unbounded licentiousness.

The Christians had the advantage over their adversaries even in outward appearance. They were cleaner and better clad, and were more orderly in their deportment. There was quite a contrast between the crowds of Christians that passed along the streets to their places of worship, and the knots of Godless, Christless men who strolled along, or sat in their doors, in their dirty clothes, with their unwashed faces, smoking their pipes, or reading their filthy papers. There was a contrast between Christian congregations and infidel meetings. One had the appearance of purity and elevation; while the other had the stamp of pollution and degradation. Irreligion seemed the nurse of coarseness and barbarism. Some of the secularists actually argued against civilization, as Rousseau had done before them. One of them reprinted Burke's ironical work in favor of the savage state, and sent it to me for review, and was greatly offended because I refused to recommend it as a sober, serious, philosophical treatise to my readers.

Hosted by Google

It was plain that there was something wrong in infidelity; that its tendency was to vice and depravity; while Christianity, whether it was divine in its origin or not, was evidently the friend and benefactor of our race.

In 1862, some friends of mine at Burnley, who had built a public hall there, engaged me as their lecturer. The parties were unbelievers, but they were opposed to the advocates of unbounded license. They were favorable to morality, and wished to have an association that should embody what they thought good in the Church, without being decidedly religious. They wished to have music and singing at the Sunday meetings, and to limit public discussion to the week-night meetings. They also wished to have Sunday-schools, day-schools, reading-rooms, and libraries. We had come to the conclusion that the Christians were right on the whole in their way of conducting their public meetings, and we were resolved to imitate them as far as we honestly could. And here I lived and labored for more than a year. We did not succeed however so well as we had expected. Our singers, and musicians, and Sunday-school teachers had no high and powerful motive to keep them regularly at their posts, so that whenever a strong temptation came to lure them away, they ran from their tasks, and left me and another or two to toil alone. We then formed a Church, and made laws, thinking to keep our associates to their duty in that way. But this made matters worse. Their fancies and pleasures were their laws, and they would obey no other. Most of our teachers left, and I and a friend or two had to teach the school ourselves. My friends established a day-school, and hired a teacher; but he turned out to be an unbounded license man; he brought with him, in fact, an unmarried woman instead of his wife, and they found it necessary to get rid of him as soon as they could.

All the time I was at Burnley my heart first, and then my head, were coming nearer and nearer to Christ and Christianity. I gradually gave up my opposition both to religion and to the churches. The last lecture in which I gave utterance to anything unfavorable to the Bible was one on Noah's flood. I spoke on the subject by request, and against my inclination, and before I had got half through

Hosted by Google

I began to feel unutterably dissatisfied with myself. I was really unhappy. From that time forward I dwelt chiefly on moral subjects, and often took occasion to speak favorably of the Bible and Christianity. I tried to explain what was dark, and to set forth what was manifestly true and good in their teachings.

I lectured on the wisdom of the Book of Proverbs, on the beauty of Christ's character, and on the excellency of many of His doctrines, on the advantages of faith in Christ, and on the follies and vices of infidel secularism, and on quite a number of other Christian subjects.

My younger son came to reside at Burnley while I was there, and we had frequent talks as we walked together along the fields and lanes, and over the neighboring hills; and this also helped to bring me nearer to Christ and His Church. I read the works of Epictetus at this time, and my faith in God and immortality, and my love of virtue too, were strengthened by his reasonings.

About the same time a person wrote to me to go and lecture at Goole. I went. No subject had been named to me, and I resolved to speak in favor of the leading practical principles of Christianity. When I got to Goole, I found that the man who had invited me had put up a bill, calling on his neighbors and fellow-townsmen to come and hear the triumphant opponent of Christianity demolish their religion. I told him he should not have put forth a bill like that,—that I was not an opponent of Christianity,—that I was not an enemy of the churches,—that I had no desire to demolish religion,—that I wished to bring people to cherish and practise the leading principles of Christianity. This rather puzzled and distressed him; but notwithstanding his disappointment, he would have me lecture. The meeting was out of doors. I soon had a large audience. I quickly undeceived such as had come expecting to hear me vilify the Bible, the churches, or religion. I spoke in the highest terms of Christ and His teachings. I showed that many of them were the perfection of wisdom and goodness. I spoke of the causes of human wretchedness, and showed that obedience to the teachings of Christ and His Apostles would remove them all. Many things that I said, and especially some remarks I made on domestic duties

Hosted by Google

and domestic happiness, went home to the hearts of my hearers. Not a murmur was heard from any quarter. Men nudged each other, and women looked in each others' faces, and all gave signs that they felt the truth of my remarks, and the wisdom of my counsels, and the meeting ended as satisfactorily as could be desired.

It was while I was living at Burnley that I began again to pray. A young atheist died, and I was invited to his funeral, and requested to speak at his grave. When we got to the cemetery the little chapel was occupied by another company, and we had to wait some time for our turn. My mind was in a sad and solemn mood, and I left my party and wandered to the farther end of the cemetery. It was a bright and beautiful day in April. The grass was springing fresh and green, and the hawthorn buds were opening, and everything seemed full of life, and big with promise. The sun was shining in all his glory. The thrushes and the blackbirds were singing in the surrounding groves and thickets, and the larks were pouring forth their melody in the air. Yet all was dark and sorrowful within. I felt the misery of unbelief, yet felt myself unable to free myself from its horrible and tormenting power. I had a growing conviction that I was the slave of a vicious method of reasoning, and of an inveterate habit of unreasonable or excessive doubt, and that I had not the power to do God and Christianity justice. I felt as if I ought to pray, but something whispered, "It is irrational." No matter, I could refrain no longer: and lifting up my tearful eyes to heaven I exclaimed, "God help me." He did help me. He strengthened my struggling soul from that hour, and gave to the good within me a growing power over the evil. I dried my tears and returned to my party. I spoke at the poor young Atheist's grave, and concluded my address with the following prayer, "May trust in God, and the hope of a better life, and the love of truth and virtue, and delight in doing good, remain with all who have them, and come to all who have them not. Amen."

The gentleman with whom I had lived at Burnley had said to me on the morning of that very day, that if I prayed at the funeral he should never think well of me more. He afterwards said. when he heard of the prayer I had offered,

Hosted by Google

he had no objection to a prayer like that. He was not aware of the shorter prayer that I had offered when alone, or he would have spoken probably in another strain. He was dreadfully opposed to religion, and very uneasy when he saw me moving in the direction of Christianity.

Among the friends who left the church on account of my expulsion, was Samuel Methley, of Mirfield, near Huddersfield. He was rather eccentric in some respects; but he was an honest, earnest, kind, and Christian man. He had had little or no school instruction, and he had nothing that could be called learning, or high intellectual culture; but he was a man of great faith, of much love, and much prayer. His affection and reverence for me were almost unbounded, and so long as I continued a believer in Christ, he was ready to go with me any lengths in Evangelical reform. When I ran into politics he was somewhat staggered, but followed me as far as he durst. When I began to be skeptical he stood still, afraid, and very unhappy. On one occasion he ventured to rebuke me; but I knew that the rebuke was the offspring of affection, and I took it quietly. When I went to America he was greatly distressed, and prayed for me most anxiously and earnestly. When he found I had become an unbeliever, he resolved never to go near a meeting of mine again, and prayed to God to help him to keep his resolution. For many years he tried to wean himself from me, to extinguish his passionate regard for me; but whenever he found that I was to lecture in his neighborhood, he lost his self-control, and came, though with reluctance, and many misgivings, to my meetings. He generally rose after my lectures, to protest against my extravagances, and to testify his uncontrollable affection for me, and his anxious desire for my salvation. To do otherwise than take his remarks in good part was impossible. Poor, dear, good man! I little thought at the time how much distress and pain I was causing him. When he found that I was coming back to Christ, he was joyful beyond measure. When he heard me preach on true religion, he was in transports. At a meeting that followed, he spoke with so much feeling and fervor, that I was obliged to try to check him a little, for fear the violence of his excitement should injure his feeble

Hosted by Google

and failing health. My conversion, though but partial then, gave him the utmost delight.

At length his feeble frame gave way, and he sank into his bed to rise no more. He sent me word that he was very desirous to see me, and I visited him without delay. He was very ill. His voice was almost gone, and he spoke with great difficulty. He told me he wished me, when he was gone, to preach his funeral sermon, and write his epitaph, and take charge of a manuscript containing the story of his life. I told him I would do so. He then spoke of his trust in God, his love of Christ, and his hopes of a blessed immortality, while tears of joy stood glistening in his eyes. He then referred to some matters that had tried him sadly, but added: "I have cast my care on God." He tried to speak of his feelings towards me, but said: "Those papers (referring to the story of his life) will tell you all." At last he said: "Pray with me, Joseph." I had not prayed with any one for many years, but I said at once: "I will, Sammy;" and I fell on my knees, and prayed by his side. He then, weak as he was, prayed earnestly for me, and for my wife and family.

He died a few weeks after. I preached his funeral sermon on the following Sunday, in May, 1863, in a field near the house in which he had lived and died, from the text: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his." There was an immense congregation, consisting of people of all denominations, both infidel and Christian, from every part of the surrounding district. When speaking of his conduct in clinging to the religion of Christ, instead of following me into the regions of doubt and unbelief, I declared my conviction that he had done right. 'He had read little," said I, "and I had read much: yet he was the wiser man of the two. His good religious instincts and feelings kept him right, and kept him happy in the warmth and sunlight of the religion of Christ; while my vain reasonings carried me astray into the dark and chilling regions of eternal cold and utter desolation. There is a seeming wisdom that is foolishness; and there is a childlike, artless simplicity of faith, which, while it is regarded as foolishness by many, is in truth the perfection of wisdom. There are things which are hid

Hosted by Google

from the wise and prudent, that are revealed to babes. And Jesus was right, when, addressing the self-conceited skeptical critics of His day, He said: 'Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' My dear departed friend, when trusting in God as his Father, and in Christ as his Saviour, and living a godly life, was right, while I, in distrusting the promptings of my religious instincts and affections, and committing myself to the reasonings of a cold and heartless logic, was wrong. The new-born babe, that rests untroubled in its mother's arms, and, without misgiving, sucks from her breast the milk so wonderfully provided for it, does the best and wisest thing conceivable. In obeying its instincts, it obeys the great good Author of its being, and lives. If—to suppose what is happily an impossibility—if the child should discard its instincts, and refuse to trust its mother, till it had logical proof of her trustworthiness; and, distrusting its natural cravings, should refuse to take the nutriment provided for it, till it could ascertain by chemical analysis and physiological investigation, that it was just the kind of food which it required, it would die. My departed friend was the happy, confiding child, and saved his soul alive; while I was the analytical and logical doubter, and all but starved my miserable soul to death. Thank God, I have lived to see my error. The loving, trusting Christian is right. The religion of Jesus is substantially true and divine; and, thus far, I declare myself a Christian."

It was a beautiful, summer-like day. The sun shone brightly, and the winds were low, and the vast congregation was orderly and attentive, and many were much affected. The report that I had declared myself a Christian, without any qualification annexed, got into the papers, and ran through the country. To many it gave the greatest satisfaction. Good, kind Christians came round me wherever I went, testifying their delight and gratitude. Some wept for joy. Unbelievers were greatly annoyed at the tidings of my conversion, and some of them came and entreated me to give the report a public contradiction. This I refused to do. True, the papers said somewhat more than I had said; but the statement they gave was

Hosted by Google

true in substance, so I let it pass, and the growing change for the better in my views and feelings soon made it true in form.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PARTIES WHO CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS MY RETURN TO CHRIST.

After I fell into doubt and unbelief, the Church, and the ministry generally, appeared to look on me as irretrievably lost. The great mass of them made no attempt for my recovery. How much they cared for my soul I do not know; but for nearly twenty years they left me to wander as a sheep that had no shepherd. Many of them spoke against me, and wrote against me, and some of them even met me in public discussion; but they never approached me in the spirit of gentleness and love, to try to win me back to Christ, and bring me once more into His Church. Some of them treated me with grievous injustice. As I have said some pages back, one minister made himself most odious to me and my friends, and did something towards increasing our antipathy to the religion which he so grossly dishonored, by his unjust and hateful doings. It is bad for Christianity when men like these are put forward as its advocates. No open enemies can do it so much injury as such unworthy friends.

There were others, however, who took a more Christian course, and if they did not succeed in at once reclaiming me from my melancholy delusions, they produced a happy effect on my mind, which helped to bring about, in the end, my return to the Christian faith.

1. There was one man, a minister, who, though he wrote against some of my views, always treated me with respect. He never gave me offensive names, nor charged me with unworthy motives, nor treated me with affected contempt. He regarded me simply as an erring brother, and strove, with genuine Christian affection, to bring me back to what he regarded as the truth. He died before my restoration

Hosted by Google

to the Church, but his labors on my behalf were not in vain.

2. A kind-hearted layman once sent me a book—"*The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation*,"—accompanied with a short, but affectionate letter. The book did not convert me, but the kindness of the friend that sent it had a happy effect. Though beyond the reach of logic, I was within the reach of love.

3. The *Author* of "*The Philosophy of the Plan of Salvation*" was Mr. Walker, a minister of Mansfield, Ohio. While in America I gave a course of lectures in that town on the Bible. The friend at whose house I was staying took me to see Mr. Walker, who received me with great kindness, invited me to dine with him, and conversed with me in a truly Christian manner. He even came to one of my lectures, in hopes of helping me over the difficulties which blocked my way to the faith of Christ. I did not, however, treat him with the kind and considerate tenderness with which he had treated me. I was under unhappy influences, and I spoke on the Bible in such a manner as to try him past endurance, and he left me that night with very painful feelings, regarding me, probably, as lost past hope. Should he read this work, it may give him satisfaction to know, that his kindness, and his work on Christ as a revelation of the Eternal Father, had a part in helping me back to the religion of Christ.

4. Five years ago last December, Mr. John Mawson, Sheriff of Newcastle-on-Tyne, was killed on the Town Moor by a terrible explosion of nitro-glycerine. I had been acquainted with him more than five-and-twenty years. He joined the church at Newcastle, of which I was a minister, and remained my friend to the last. He had his doubts on certain points of theology, but he never lost his faith in the great principles of Christianity. When I was over from America once, I spent some time in his company, and we had frequent conversations on religion. "It seems to me," said he, "that we ought to put some trust in our *hearts*. My head has often tempted me to doubt; but my heart has always clung to God and immortality. It does so still; and I believe it is right. Indeed, I have no doubt of it." I remembered his words. They led me to study

Hosted by Google

the moral and spiritual instincts of my nature more thoroughly than I had done before. They led me to study the subject of instinct and natural affection generally. *My* instincts, like the instincts of my friend, had always clung to God and a future life, and to the principles of religion and virtue, even when reason hesitated and doubted most. I had never given up my belief in any of the great doctrines of Christianity without a painful struggle. But I had been led to think it my duty, when there was a conflict between my head and my heart, to take part with my head. My heart, for instance, would say, "Pray;" but reason, or something in the garb of reason, would say, "Don't. If what you desire is good, God will give it you, whether you pray for it or not; and if it be evil, He will withhold it, pray as you may. Prayer may move a man like yourself; but it cannot move God." And I hearkened to the seeming reason, and gave up prayer. My heart said, "There is a personal, conscious, all-perfect God." My head, or my infidel philosophy said, "There cannot be such a God. A God all-powerful could prevent evil. A God all-good *would* prevent it. God cannot therefore be a conscious, personal, all-perfect being. He must be a blind, unconscious power; the sum total of natural tendencies, working according to the eternal properties of things, without the possibility of change; and hence the existence of evil, and the prevalence of eternal, unalterable law." And here again my head was permitted to prevail, and my heart, in spite of all its remonstrances, was compelled to give way. And with a personal, conscious, all-perfect God, went the richest treasures of the human heart,—trust in a Fatherly Providence; the hope of a blessed immortality, and faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice, and all assurance of human progress and a good time coming.

Yet I was obliged, in spite of the false philosophical principle I had adopted, to accept the oracles of my heart on many points, and to reject the logic of my head. My heart said, "Speak the truth; to lie is wrong." But now that it had got rid of a personal God, logic said, "There can be nothing wrong in a lie that hurts no one. There is something commendable in a useful, serviceable lie. To lie to save a person from danger or destruction is a virtue.

Hosted by Google

The feeling which shrinks from such a lie is a blind, irrational prejudice, and should be plucked up and cast out of the soul. Truth may be proper enough in the *strong:* but *deceit* is the wisdom of the *weak.*" But in this case my heart, my instinctive love of truth, prevailed.

Again, my heart pleaded for justice and mercy; for *justice* to all; and for *mercy* to the needy and helpless. But reason, or the heartless and godless philosophy that usurped its name, said, "Utility is the supreme law; the only law of man. Justice and mercy are right when they are useful; but when they are hurtful they are right no longer. If by destroying the helpless and the needy we can deliver them from their misery, and increase the happiness of the rest of our race, their destruction is a virtue, especially if we dispose of them in a quiet and painless way, so as to spare them the fears and agonies of death!" But here again my heart prevailed. My natural, unreasoning, instinctive horror of injustice and murder rendered the specious pleadings of Atheistic utilitarianism powerless. And so on moral matters generally.

As a rule, Atheists succeed, in course of time, in vanquishing and destroying their moral as well as their religious instincts, and then they embrace the most revolting doctrines, and reconcile themselves to the most appalling deeds. They look on marriage as irrational, and regard modesty and chastity as vices. Shame is a weakness in their eyes, and natural affections are irrational prejudices. Scruples against lying, theft and murder, when any great good is to be gained by those practices, are insanity. Gratitude, even to parents, is an absurdity. Free indulgence, unlimited license, is a virtue. The curse of our race is religion. The one great social evil is a surplus population; and the prevention or destruction of children is the sum of social science and virtue. The extinction of the weaker races, and the destruction of those of every race who cannot contribute their share of wealth and pleasure to the common stock, is the perfection of philosophy. In short, all the old-fashioned principles of virtue, honor, conscience, generosity, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, and natural affection are exploded, and in their place there comes a black and hideous chaos of all indecencies and immoralities, a boundless

Hosted by Google

and bottomless abyss of all imaginable and unspeakable horrors. I shudder when I think how near I came to this hell of atheistical philosophy. My inability entirely to extinguish my better instincts and affections, prevented me from plunging headlong into its frightful depths. It was more than I could do to carry out the atheistical principles of mere theoretical reasoning to its last results. I was, thank God, on some points, always inconsistent, and my inconsistency was my salvation. My heart preserved me in spite of my head.

But if I could not carry out my principle of trusting to mere reasoning to its full extent, why did I act on it at all? When I found that it led to utter degradation and ruin, why did I not renounce it, and trust once more in my native instincts? When I found myself obliged to follow my heart in so many matters, why not follow it in all? I answer, I had not a sufficient understanding of the matter. I wanted more light. But the course of study on which the remarks of my dear good friend Mr. Mawson led me to enter, led to clearer and correcter views on the subject. It led to the conviction that instinct and natural affection are divine inspirations,—that the beliefs and practices to which they constrain us are the perfection of wisdom and goodness,—that to set them aside is inevitable ruin,—that whenever reason says one thing, and our religious and moral affections and instincts say another, we ought to turn a deaf ear to reason, and follow implicitly the dictates of our moral and religious faculties. And to this conviction, resulting in a great measure from the remarks of my faithful and devoted friend, I owe, in part, my present unspeakable happiness as a believer in Christ.

5. I encountered two Christian men in public discussion who left a favorable impression on my mind. One was the Rev. Andrew Loose, of Winchester, Indiana. The subject of discussion between me and Mr. Loose was the divine authority of the Bible. He went through the whole debate, which lasted several days, without uttering one uncharitable, scornful, or angry word, with the exception of a single phrase in his last speech; and even that he meekly and generously recalled, after I had satisfied him of its impropriety. I never forgot the conduct of that

Hosted by Google

dear good man, and his Christian meekness and forbearance had a good effect on my heart.

6. The other gentleman whose conduct left the most favorable impression of all on my mind, was Colonel Shaw, of Bourtree Park, Ayr, Scotland, of whose gentlemanly behavior and great Christian kindness I have already spoken.

7. There were some other persons who, without assailing me with argument, did me considerable good. After lecturing at Burnley once, a person rose to oppose me, and a great disturbance followed. I was thrown from the platform, and fell backward on the floor, and a crowd of persons fell upon me, and I had a narrow escape from death by violence and suffocation. I was rescued however alive. In the tumult my overcoat, my hat, and my watch disappeared, and my body was somewhat bruised. Next day a gentleman who had heard of the way in which I had been treated, came to my lodgings to see me. He seemed very much distressed on my account, and anxious, if possible, to do something which might minister comfort to my mind. His name was Philips. He was a Methodist, and the son of a Methodist preacher. His kindness and sympathy were so genuine and so earnest, that they made a deep impression on my mind, and they naturally recur to my memory when I think of the friends whose influence helped to reclaim me from the miseries of doubt and unbelief.

8. About thirteen years ago I lectured at Bacup. The Rev. T. Lawson, Congregational minister of Bacup, attended my lectures, and came and spoke to me afterwards, and invited me to call and see him, and dine with him. I went, and we had a lengthened conversation on matters pertaining to religion and the Church. My host exhibited a remarkable amount of Christian charity and true liberality of sentiment. He had been a reader of mine in his earlier days, when I was an advocate of Evangelical reform, and he spoke of himself as my debtor; and he was desirous, if possible, of repaying the debt, by smoothing the way for my return to Christianity. Mrs. Lawson sat and listened to our conversation in silence; but when I rose to take my leave, she bade me good-bye with most unmistakable evidences of interest in my welfare, and said,

Hosted by Google

as she held me by the hand, "I hope we shall meet you in heaven." I had one or two other interviews with Mr. Lawson at a somewhat later period, and all are to be placed among the means by which I was brought to my present happy position.

9. Some nineteen years ago I had a public discussion with the Rev. Charles Williams, Baptist minister, of Accrington. It was a very unpleasant affair. I was much exhausted at the time with over much work, and with long-continued and painful excitement caused by a very unpleasant piece of business which I had in hand; and I did what I honorably could to avoid the discussion. My friends, however, would have no nay, and I reluctantly, and in anything but an amiable temper, made my appearance at the time appointed on the platform. How far the blame was chargeable on me, or how far it was chargeable on others, I do not know; but the first night's meeting was a very disagreeable one. I thought myself in the right at the time, but I fancy my unhappy state of mind must have rendered me very provoking, and at the same time blinded me to the real character of my proceedings. On the following night the discussion went on more smoothly, and it ended better than it began. I was constrained to regard Mr. Williams as an able and good man. I met him occasionally after my separation from the Secularists, and his behaviour and spirit deepened the favorable impression of his character already made on my mind. While I was at Burnley he delivered a lecture in that town on Bishop Colenso's work on the Pentateuch. I was present. When he had done, he invited me in the kindest way imaginable to speak. I had heard next to nothing in the lecture to which I could object, but much that I could heartily approve and applaud. To all that he had said in praise of the Bible I could subscribe most heartily. Indeed I felt that the Bible was worthy of more and higher praise than he had bestowed on it, and I expressed myself to that effect. The meeting altogether was a very pleasant one, except to a number of unbelievers, who were dreadfully vexed at my remarks in commendation of the Bible. I saw Mr. Williams repeatedly afterwards, and his kind and interesting conversation, and his very gentlemanly and

Hosted by Google

Christian demeanor, had always a beneficial effect on my mind.

10. One of the first to express a conviction that I should become a Christian was an American lady, whom I sometimes saw in London. She had herself been an unbeliever, but had been cured of her skepticism by spiritualism. She was then a Catholic. She gave me a medal of the Virgin Mary, and entreated me to wear it round my neck. To please her I promised to do so. But the medal disappeared before long, and what became of it I never could tell; but my friend had the satisfaction to see her prophecy fulfilled in my happy return to Christianity.

11. An acquaintance which I formed with the Rev. W. Newton, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, must also be reckoned among the things which exerted an influence on my mind favorable to Christianity. Mr. Newton had been a Baptist in his earlier days, but getting into perplexity with regard to certain doctrines, he became a Unitarian. He came to feel however, in course of time, that something more than Unitarianism was necessary to the satisfaction of his soul, and to the salvation of the world; and at the time that I became acquainted with him, he had made up his mind to leave the Unitarians. On my way to the far-off regions of unbelief, I had passed through the Unitarian territory; and I passed through the same territory, or near to its border, on my return to Christianity; and had it not been for my interviews with Mr. Newton, and a somewhat startling event or two that occurred about that period, I might have lingered for a time in that cold and hungry land. Mr. Newton helped to quicken my steps, and I moved onward, and rested not, till I found my way back to the paradise, or a garden that very much resembled the paradise, of my earlier days.

12. Mr. J. Potts, like Mr. J. Mawson, without following me into the extremes of doubt, retained his friendship for me through all my wanderings, and never neglected any opportunity he had of showing me kindness. And others, whom I cannot take the liberty to name, evinced the same unfailing constancy of esteem and love. And the unbroken connexion that remained between my enduring friends and their amiable families and myself, added to

Hosted by Google

the attractions Christ-ward, and made it easier for my soul to return at last to its home of peace and rest.

13. Between thirteen and fourteen years ago, while living in London, I became acquainted with Mr. W. White. He had been reared a Quaker, but, like most hard thinkers, had had experience of doubt, and was, in consequence, after his faith was re-established, able to strengthen his doubting brethren. He contributed to my conversion, first by his enlightened conversation, and then by a long, kind, Christian letter on the Bible, by which he helped me over a number of difficulties which stood in the way of my faith.

14. But perhaps none of the parties I have named, had a more powerful and beneficial effect on my mind than one whom I have not yet mentioned. If I had been asked thirteen years ago, whether I supposed there was any minister in the Methodist New Connexion who regarded me with affectionate solicitude, and who was wishful for an opportunity to speak to me words of love and tenderness, I should have answered, "No." If any one had told me that there really was one of my old associates, with whom I had formerly had warm controversy, not only on matters theological, but on matters personal, who had been watching my career for years with the deepest interest, and who for months and years had been earnestly praying for me every day, he would have seemed to me as one amusing himself with fables. Yet such was really the case.

With no one had I come in closer contact perhaps, or in more frequent and violent collision, than with the Rev. W. Cooke, now Dr. Cooke. He had taken the lead in the proceedings against me in the Ashton Conference, on account of my article on *Toleration, Human Creeds, &c.*, proceedings which had a most unhappy effect on my mind, and which led, at length, to my separation from the Church, and to my alienation from Christ. He had taken an active part in the violent controversies which followed my expulsion from the ministry. We had, at a later period, spent ten nights in public discussion on the leading doctrines of Christianity. He had, in the performance of what he considered his duty I suppose in my case, said

Hosted by Google

things which had tried me terribly; and I, with ideas of duty differing from his, had made him very liberal returns, in a way not calculated to leave the most favorable or comfortable impressions on his mind towards me. I had never seen him since our long discussion but once, and then he seemed, to my fancy, to be struggling with an inward tempest of very unhappy feeling towards me, which he was hardly able to keep from exploding. I afterwards found though, that I had not interpreted his looks on this occasion correctly. At the time when I took my leave of the Secularists, my unpleasant feelings towards my old opponent had about subsided; but I had no idea that his unpleasant feelings towards me had passed away. Yet such was the case. He had been reading my periodical for some time, and had been pleased to find that both on religion and politics, I was returning, though slowly, to the views of my happier days. Some time in August, 1862, he called at my office in London, with a parcel of books under his arm. He had been praying for me daily for twelve months, when something seemed to say to him, "You should do something more than pray." And now he had come to try what he could do by a personal interview to aid the wanderer's return to Christ. I was from home at the time, but my eldest son was in the office, and he and the Doctor were at once engaged in friendly conversation. "How like you are to what your father was four and thirty years ago, when I first knew him," said the Doctor. "Your father and I were great friends. It was your father that first directed me to the study of Latin and Greek, which have been of great service to me; and I feel indebted to him on that account. We were afterwards separated. But I have observed, as I think, symptoms that your father is returning towards his former views." And many other kind remarks he made. At length he said, "Do you think your father would accept a copy of my works?" My son, who knew the state of his father's mind, answered; "I am sure he would, with great pleasure." The Doctor left copies of his works, kindly inscribed to me with his own hand; and with the books, he left for me a kind and Christian letter. My son lost no time in forwarding me the letter, together with an account

Hosted by Google

of the pleasant and unlooked-for interview which he had had with the writer. I received the letter, and the interesting story with which it was accompanied, with the greatest astonishment and pleasure. I wrote to the Doctor, reciprocating his expressions of kindness, and making the best returns I could for the valuable present of his works. The result was a correspondence, which has continued to the present time. The correspondence led to interviews, in which the Doctor exhibited, in a very striking manner, the graces and virtues that adorn the Christian character. We talked, we read, we sang, we prayed together, and gave God thanks, with tears of gratitude, for all the blessings of His boundless love.

The effect of this kindness on the part of Dr. Cooke was, not only to free my mind from any remains of hurtful feelings towards him, but to dispose me, and enable me, to review the claims of Christianity and the Bible in a spirit of greater fairness and candor, and so to make it possible for me to become, what I had long believed I never could become, a hearty believer in the religion of Christ.

CHAPTER XIX.

SOME OF THE STEPS BY WHICH I CAME TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

I am not certain that I can state the exact process by which I passed from doubt and unbelief to faith in Christ, but the following, I believe, is very near the truth.

1. There was, first, a sense of the cheerlessness of unbelief—the sadness and the sorrow resulting from the loss of trust in God and hope of immortality, and from the wretched prospect of a return to utter nothingness.

2. Then came the distressing feeling of inability to comfort my afflicted or dying friends—my utter helplessness in the presence of sorrow, grief and agony.

3. And then I found myself unable to account for the wonderful marks of design appearing in nature, and especially in my own body, without the acknowledgment of an

Hosted by Google

intelligent Deity. The wonderful perfection and beauty of a flower or a feather would confound me; while mysterious adaptations in my own frame would fill me with amazement. Darwin's theory of development relieved me for a time; but I soon came to see that some of his explanations of natural phenomena were erroneous, and that none of his facts proved the truth of his theory. Still later I found that Darwin himself acknowledged that the evidences of design in the methods by which certain species of plants were fertilized, were not only overpowering, but startling.

4. Then came dissatisfaction with the theories by which unbelievers sought to account for the existence and order of the universe. They supposed the universe to be eternal, and attributed the production of plants, and animals, and man to the blind unconscious working of lifeless matter. They attributed to dead matter the powers which believers attributed to a living God. They were obliged to believe that senseless atoms could produce works transcending the powers of the mightiest minds on earth. To reconcile their belief in the eternity of the universe, and in the unchanging properties of matter, with the phenomena of change and progress, they supposed an infinite succession of worlds, or of beginnings and endings of the same world, and imagined the earth running exactly the same course, and having exactly the same history, every time it came into existence. Hence it became with them an article of faith, that we had ourselves lived an infinite number of times, and should live an infinite number of times more in the future, repeating always exactly the same life, with exactly the same results. It was also an article of faith that we were mere machines, governed by powers over which we had no control; that our ideas of liberty, and our feelings of responsibility, or of good and ill desert, were all delusions; that all the errors, and crimes, and miseries of our race were inevitable, and were to be eternally repeated; and that a change for the better was eternally impossible. But time would fail me to mention all their theories. It is enough to say that the wild and unsatisfactory nature of these dreams helped to drive me back to Christianity.

Hosted by Google

5. There was, of course, no tendency in unbelief to promote virtue, or to check vice. Its natural tendency was to utter depravity. And Christianity retained such an influence over me, even to the last, that I could never reconcile myself to a vicious life.

6. Then came another trouble. Infidelity could give no guarantee that wrong should not finally triumph, and right be finally crushed. It is belief in God alone that can give assurance that virtue shall be ultimately rewarded, and vice ultimately punished. The Christian can believe past doubt, that "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;" that "with what judgment we judge, we shall be judged; and with what measure we mete, it shall be measured to us again." But the infidel has no foundation for such a faith. For anything he knows, a man may sow villany, and reap honor and blessedness. He may live by injustice and cruelty, and meet with no punishment, either here or hereafter; while another may spend his days in doing good, and give his life for the salvation of his fellows, and receive only torture, reproach, and death.

Nor is there any security for the triumph of truth on the infidel principle. For anything infidelity knows, truth may be always in the mire, and its friends be forever reproached and shunned; while error may always be in the ascendant, and its propagators honored and rewarded. Indeed this is the case at present, if infidelity be true. For infidelity is in the dust, while faith in God and Christ is in high repute. And infidels are suspected and dreaded, while consistent believers are loved and trusted. Faith smoothes man's way through life, and in some cases raises him to honor and power; while Atheism makes a man's pathway rugged, and prevents his elevation. This state of things is exceedingly unsatisfactory to unbelievers. They ought, if they are the wisest of men, as they suppose, to be everywhere received with honor. They ought to be placed in power. The world should ring with their praise. The universe should enrich them with its treasures. The names of their predecessors in unbelief should be had in the greatest honor. They should stand first on the roll of fame. Their monuments should fill

Hosted by Google

the earth. The sweetest poets should sing their praises: the most eloquent orators should proclaim their greatness; and the nations should delight to celebrate their worth. Their pictures and statues should grace our courts, our temples, and our palaces. Their deeds should form the staple of our pleasant histories, and their writings crowd the shelves of our libraries. Children should be taught to lisp their names with reverence, and the aged should bless them with their parting breath.

On the other hand, if religion be false and foolish, if it be unnatural and mischievous, its friends should be pitied or despised, if not rebuked and punished. Its founders and propagators should be branded as the weakest or the basest of men. Their names should be had in contempt or abhorrence. Their writings should be everywhere decried. Their pictures and statues should fill some chamber of horrors. Historians, poets, and orators should hold them up to reprobation. Christians should be kept from places of trust, and from posts of honor. They should be wretched, and poor, and miserable, and the hearts of men, and the powers of nature, should combine for their destruction, and for the utter extinction of their cause.

Yet the state of things is just the contrary. Christianity triumphs, and Christians are honored; while infidelity languishes, and its disciples are covered with shame. On the Atheist's theory the human race has existed for millions of years, yet it has never produced more than a few individuals who have acknowledged the principle of his creed. The mass of men, in all ages, have been believers in God. The civilized as well as the savage, the learned as well as the ignorant, the high as well as the low, alike have adored a Deity. Even the greatest of our race have been believers. The sweetest poets, the profoundest philosophers, the greatest statesmen, the wisest legislators, the most venerable judges, the most devoted philanthropists, have all believed in God. Two or three tribes have been found, it is said, without an idea of God; but they were savages of the lowest grade; and it is not yet settled whether the accounts that have been given of those wretched creatures be correct or not.

And Atheism has always been regarded with horror. It

Hosted by Google

is so still. It is believed to be the nurse of vice and crime. Atheists are everywhere looked upon with suspicion and dread. The prevailing impression is that they are bad and dangerous men,—that no reliance is to be placed on their word,—that they are naturally licentious, dishonest, deceitful, cruel,—that they are prepared for any enormity,—that they are enemies to domestic purity and civil order, and that no one is safe in their power. If ever they were regarded by mankind with favor, the time is forgotten. There is not a nation on earth in which they are popular now. They are everywhere branded as infamous.

If Atheists have always been so bad as to *deserve* this fate, their principles must be bad. If they have deserved a better fate,—if they have been pure, and just, and true,—if they have been remarkable for generosity, patriotism, and philanthropy,—if they have distinguished themselves as the friends of virtue, and the benefactors of mankind, how sad to think that they have never received their due at the hands of men.

The longer the Atheists look on their condition, the less satisfactory it appears. They have no grand history, no glorious names, to reflect honor on their cause. They have no noble army of martyrs. They have no great monuments. And they can have no assurance of anything better in days to come. The probability is that their memory will rot, and that their principles will be an offence and loathing to mankind through all succeeding generations.

But look on the other side? The highest name on earth is a religious name; the name of Jesus. The names which stand next in honor are those of His Apostles and followers. The mightiest nations on earth are Christian nations. Christians rule the world. Christian ministers are honored and revered. Christian churches rise to wealth and power. The Church controls the state. It controls it most when it is least ambitious, and most consistent. The Church has a glorious history. It has the grandest array of honorable names. It has the noblest army of martyrs. It has the richest literature. Its sacred books are read in all the leading languages of the earth.

Hosted by Google

The great geniuses are her's. The richest poetry, the grandest eloquence, the divinest philosophy, the noblest courage, the richest generosity, the most devoted philanthropy, are all her's. She has the credit of being the parent and the nurse of our highest civilization. She is the great educator. She builds our schools. She rules our colleges. She controls the press. She plants new nations. She spreads herself and exerts her influence in every land. You cannot destroy the Church. It is immortal. You cannot limit its power. It is irresistibly expansive and invincible. If at any time it suffers loss, it is through its own unfaithfulness; and a return to duty is a return to dominion.

Even in countries not Christian the religious element is supreme, and the religious men alone are honored. The greatest names in the history of India and China, of Persia and Turkey, are the names of their prophets and religious leaders.

What follows from all this? That if infidelity be true and good, and religion false and mischievous, the world and the human race are wholly wrong. The best and wisest men are everywhere despised, and the weakest and wickedest are everywhere honored. The originators of the greatest delusions are deified; and the revealers of the greatest truths are regarded as monsters. Truth no longer can be said to be mighty, and error can no longer be said to be weak. The right is no longer sure of triumph, nor the wrong of overthrow. Men love darkness and hate the light; and it is not the few that do so, but the many. And there seems no hope of a change for the better. Earth is no place for the great, the good, the wise; but for the ignorant, the deluded, and the base alone. It is the paradise of fools, and the purgatory of philosophers.

But I asked, "*Is* infidelity true and good, and religion false and mischievous? Am I not laboring under some monster delusion? Have I not been imposed upon by a vicious logic? Are not mankind right in hating and dreading infidelity, and in loving and honoring religion? There is a tremendous mistake somewhere. Either infidelity is wrong, or mankind and the universe are fearfully perverse."

Hosted by Google

7. And now I began a reconsideration of the claims of religion and infidelity. As I have said, I re-read the Bible. I reviewed Church history. I examined the character and workings of religious communities. And I found the Bible a better and a wiser book than I had ever imagined. And I found Christianity, as presented in the teachings and life of Jesus, the fairest and loveliest, the most glorious and beneficent of all systems. I found Jesus Himself to be the most beautiful and exalted of all characters. I saw in Paul a dignity and a glory second only to those of Christ. I found in the New Testament the perfection of wisdom and beneficence. I found in the history of the Church a record of the grandest movement, and of the most glorious and beneficent reformation, the world had ever witnessed. I found in the churches the mightiest agencies and the most manifold operations for the salvation of mankind. "Christianity," said I, "whether supernatural or not, is a wondrous power. It is good, if it is not true. It is glorious. It *deserves* to be Divine, whether it be so or not. What a world we should have,—what a heaven on earth—if men could be brought to believe its teachings, to imbibe its spirit, and to obey its precepts. What a heaven of bliss it would be to one's soul if one could see it and feel it to be really true."

It had conquered my heart. It had won my love. And I would gladly have died, or would gladly have lived through ages of hardship and toil, to be satisfied of its divinity. How glad I was when I found men heartily believing it. How sad when I found them doubting, like myself. How delighted I was when I found my objections to its truth slowly fading away, and saw facts in its favor coming gradually into view.

But doubt had become a powerful tyrant, and I had become a slave; and though I *wished* I could be a Christian, I could indulge no hope of ever experiencing so great a happiness. But I would do Christianity justice, to the best of my ability. I would exhibit its excellencies. I would defend it against false accusations. I would preach it so far as I honestly could. I would practise its precepts so far as I was able. I would cherish its spirit. "If it is not from God," said I, "it is the best production of the

Hosted by Google

mind of man. If I cannot hold it forth as a divine revelation, I can extol it as the perfection of human wisdom. And some of its teachings are evidently true, and others are easily proved to be so. It is true throughout, so far as I can test it; and it may be true—perhaps I shall some day find it to be true—on points on which I am unable to test it at present. I will wait, and labor meanwhile to promote its beneficent influence!"

I looked on the other side. I read the Secularists' Bible: I reviewed the history of unbelief; I examined the character and working of infidel communities. And what was the result! The Secularists' Bible I found to be a huge and revolting mass of filth and loathsomeness; the most shameless attack on virtue and happiness that ever came under my view. I remembered that Carlisle and Robert Owen had published books of the same immoral and dehumanizing tendency. The history of infidelity I found to be a history of licentiousness, and of every abomination. The infidel communities I found to be hot-beds of depravity. The leaders of the party were teachers and examples of deceit, of dishonesty, of intemperance, of gambling, and of unbounded licentiousness. They had no virtue; they had no conscience; and it was only when they were in the presence of men of other views, that they had any shame, or modesty, or regard for decency. And they were fearfully intolerant and malignant towards those who crossed them, or thwarted them, in their projects. They were no great workers, but they would exert themselves to the utmost to annoy or vilify the objects of their displeasure. The facts that came to my knowledge with regard to the morals of the Secularists contributed to my deliverance from the thraldom of unbelief.

The honor awarded to Christ, and the infamy attached to infidelity, are no mistakes. Jesus has never been exalted beyond His merits, and infidelity has never been hated or dreaded beyond its deserts. Christianity is the sum and perfection of all that is good, and true, and glorious; and atheism is the sum and aggravation of all that is vile, and mischievous, and miserable. It would be sad for the world if men should lose their instinctive dread of infidelity, and begin to speak of it as an error of little moment. It is a

Hosted by Google

monster conglomeration of all evil, and it has no redeeming quality.

8. Among the lectures which I delivered in my transition state was one in answer to the question: "What do you offer as a substitute for the Bible? Can you give us anything better?" I said that I had no desire to *do away* with the Bible; that I wished them to read it, study it, and reduce the better part of its precepts to practice. I said: "With those who would destroy the Bible, or prevent its circulation, I have no sympathy and no connexion. The Bible is a book of great interest and value; to say the least, it presents us with the thoughts of the best and wisest of men, on subjects of the greatest interest and importance; it gives us the best picture of the life and manners of the nations and institutions of the ancient world; it is a wonderful revelation of human nature; it tells the most interesting stories; it contains the grandest and most beautiful poetry, the wisest proverbs, the most faithful denunciations of vice and crime, the most earnest exhortations to duty, the best examples of virtue, the most instructive and touching narratives of people of distinguished worth, the most rational and practical definitions of religion, the worthiest representations of God and the universe, the greatest encouragement to fidelity under reproach and persecution, the richest consolations under afflictions and trials, and the most cheering exhibitions of future blessedness. We know of nothing good in any system which is not favored by some portion of the Bible. We know of nothing evil which is not condemned by other portions. All that is best and noblest and grandest in man's nature is there embodied. We know of no good or generous feeling which is not there expressed. We cannot imagine it possible for a book to be more earnest in its exhortations to the performance of duty, or to the culture of virtue. There is no book on earth that we should be more reluctant to part with than the Bible. Its destruction would be a fearful loss to mankind. It is a mine containing treasures of infinite value. The wisest may learn more wisdom from its teachings, and the best be raised to higher virtue by its influence. It has done much good; it is doing good still; it is calculated to do still greater good in days to come. Old as it is, it is a

Hosted by Google

wiser book than the books of religion that are written in the present day. It is wiser than the preachers; wiser than the great divines. It is infinitely superior to the Bibles that have been made in later times, such as the Bible of the Shakers, the Bible of Reason, and the Book of Mormon.

"It is superior to the Koran, though the authors of the Koran, like later makers of Bibles, had the older Bible to help them. The Koran is the best of modern Bibles, because it borrows most freely from the Old and New Testaments.

"The Bible is vastly better as a moral book, and as a persuasive and help to duty, than the writings of the best of the ancient Greeks and Romans. The Bible is consistent with itself as a moral teacher, though the precepts of Judaism are inferior to those of Christianity. The Bible treats man as a subject of law, as bound to obey God and do right, from first to last; and though it begins with fewer and less perfect precepts, suited to lower states of society, it goes steadily on to perfection, till it gives us the highest law, and the most perfect example, in the teachings and life of Christ. Read your Bibles; commit the better portions of the Book to your memory; think of them, practise them. Don't be ashamed to do so. The greatest philosophers, not excepting such men as Newton, Locke, and Boyle; the most celebrated monarchs, from Alfred to Victoria; the most venerable judges, with Sir Matthew Hale as their representative; the sweetest poets, from Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton, down to Dryden, Young, and Cowper; and the most devoted philanthropists, from Penn, and Howard, and Wesley, to Elizabeth Fry and Florence Nightingale, have been lovers and students of the Bible. The men that hate the Bible and wish for its destruction, are the base and bad. The men who love it and labor for its world-wide circulation, are the good and the useful. You cannot have a better companion than the Bible, if you will use it judiciously. There is no danger that you should rate it too high. If you should regard it as supernaturally inspired, it will do you no harm. Such ideas may make you read it more carefully, and pay more respect to its teachings, and that

Hosted by Google

will be a blessing. Men are in no danger of prizing good books too highly. As a rule, they esteem them far too lightly. A great good book is one of the richest treasures on earth. There is still less danger that you should think too much of the Bible. The man does not live that has erred in that direction. The best friends the Bible has, the most strenuous advocates of its divinity, do not estimate the Book above its worth. They do not value it according to its worth. It is richer in its contents, it is better and mightier in its influences, than its devoutest friends are aware.

"There are men who prate about Bibliolatry, and labor to lower men's estimate of the Bible. They may spare their breath. The people who idolize the Bible too much are creatures of their own imagination only, and not living men and women. People may love the Bible unwisely, but not too well. To place it too high as a means of instructing, regenerating and blessing mankind, is not in man's power.

"I esteem it myself more highly than I ever did. My ramblings in the regions of doubt and unbelief; my larger acquaintance with the works of infidel philosophers, atheistical reformers, fanatical dreamers, re-organizers of society, makers of new moral worlds, skeptical historians of civilization, Essays and Reviews, Elements of Social Science, Phases of Faith, and Phases of no Faith, and a world of other books; my enlarged acquaintance with men, my sense of spiritual want and wretchedness when shut out from religious consolations, have led me to value the Bible, skeptical as I yet am, as I never valued it before.

"I was born in a town on a hill, from which I had delightful views of a rich and beautiful valley. I looked on those beautiful prospects spread out before me, with their charming variety of scenery, from my earliest days, to the time I left my native land, but I have no recollection that I ever experienced in those early times any large amount of pleasure from the sight. In course of time I left the place of my birth and the home of my childhood, and visited other lands. I saw rivers and lakes, and mountains and plains, and forests and prairies in great abund-

Hosted by Google

ance, and in almost endless variety. And I compared them one with another, and marked their points of difference and resemblance. And then after my many and long wanderings, I returned to the place of my birth, and looked on the scenes of my childhood again; and I was lost in ecstacies. I was amazed that I had seen so little of their beauty, and been so little transported with their charms before.

"And so with regard to the Bible. I was born in a family in which the Bible was read every day of the year. I heard its lessons from the lips of a venerable father, and of a most affectionate mother. I read the book myself. I studied it when I came of age, and treasured up many of its teachings in my heart. I preached its truths to others. I defended its teachings against infidel assailants, and was eloquent in its praise.

"But a change took place; a strange, unlooked-for change. I was severed from the Church. I became an unbeliever. I turned away my eyes from the book, or looked chiefly on such portions of it as seemed to justify my unbelief. I have been led of late to return to the book, and to study it with a desire to do it justice; and the result is, I love it, I prize it, as I never did in my life. I read it at times with unspeakable transports, and I am sorry I should ever have been so insensible to its infinite excellences."

Such was my lecture. Those who had come to oppose, seemed puzzled what to say. One man said I had been brought there to curse the Bible, and lo! I had blessed it altogether. Another said that what I had uttered could not be my real sentiments—that my praise of the Bible must be a trap or a snare. My answer was, They are my real convictions, and the sentiments that I publish in my weekly paper. Then how comes it that you are brought here by the Secularists? I answered, My custom is to accept invitations from any party, but to teach my own sentiments.

One young man came to me at Bristol, after hearing me deliver this lecture, and said how glad he was at what I had said. "When my mother was dying," said he, "she gave me a Bible, and pressed me to read it; and I did so

Hosted by Google

for a while. But when I became a skeptic, I lost my interest in the book, and I didn't know what to do with it. I didn't like to sell it, or destroy it, because it was the gift of my mother; yet I seemed to have no use for it. I shall read it now with pleasure."

On the following evening I lectured on *True Religion.* The gentleman who had come to oppose me said it was the best sermon, or about the best, he had ever heard. He seemed at a loss to know what right I had to speak so earnestly in favor of all that was good, and appeared inclined to abuse me for not saying something bad. I took all calmly, and the meeting ended pleasantly.

9. And now, instead of trying to shake men's faith in religion, I labored to strengthen it. I was satisfied that the faith of the Christian was right in substance, if it was not quite right in form. And I was satisfied there was something terribly wrong in unbelief, though I could not yet free myself entirely from its horrible power.

10. The feeling grew stronger that my remaining doubts were unreasonable; that my soul was a slave to an evil spell, the result of long persistence in an evil method of reasoning; yet I lacked the power to emancipate myself. At length, as I have said, I appealed to Heaven and cried, "GOD HELP ME!" and my struggling soul was strengthened and released.

11. I had looked at the Church when a Christian minister from the highest ground, and it seemed too low. I had compared it with Christ and His teachings, and it seemed full of shortcomings. I now looked at it from low ground, and it seemed high. I compared it with what I had seen in infidel society, and read in infidel books; and I was filled with admiration of its order, and of its manifold labors of love. I tried to imitate the order and beneficent operations of the Church in my Burnley society, but failed. Faith in Christianity, and the spirit of its glorious Author, were wanting. The body without the spirit is dead.

12. I was first convinced that Christianity was necessary to the happiness of man, and to the regeneration of the world, but had doubts as to its truth. I now saw that much of it was true. In course of time I came to be satisfied that the religion of Christ was true as a *whole;*

Hosted by Google

that it was a revelation from God; that Christ Himself was a revelation both of what God *is*, and of what man *ought* to be; that He was God's image and man's model: that He was God incarnate, God manifest in the flesh, and the one great Saviour of mankind. My objections to miracles gave way. They seemed groundless. I saw miracles in nature. They were wrought on every emergency, even to secure the comfort of the lower animals. What could be more rational than to expect them to be wrought in aid of man's illumination and salvation? My moral and religious feelings got stronger. My skeptical tendencies grew weaker. I continued to look at Christ. I studied him more and more. My heart waxed warmer; my love to God and Christ became a mighty flame. I got among the followers of Christ; I gave free scope, I gave full play, to my better affections, and heavenward tendencies. I read, I prayed, I wrote, I lectured, I preached. I gave free utterance to what I believed, and while doing so, came to believe still more, and to believe with fuller assurance. I used no violence with myself, except my lower self. I went no further in my preaching than I had gone in my belief, and I accepted no doctrines or theories which did not present themselves to my soul as true and right. But I came at length to see, not the perfection and divinity of any particular system of theology, but the perfection and divinity of Christianity, and the substantial perfection and divinity of the Sacred Scriptures.

13. I examined the popular objections to Christianity and the Bible. Some were exceedingly childish; some seemed wicked; some, it was plain, originated in ignorance; some in error. Paine, Owen, Parker, and certain students of nature, came to erroneous conclusions with regard to Christ and the Bible, because they tried them by false standards. Jesus said nothing on the value of representative and democratic forms of government, so Paine considered Him ignorant of the conditions of human happiness. It was Paine however that was ignorant, not Jesus. Jesus was so wise, that Paine was not able to appreciate His views or do Him justice. Owen believed that man was the creature of circumstances; that his character was formed for him, not by him, and that he was

Hosted by Google

not responsible therefore for his actions. Christ taught a contrary doctrine. Owen therefore considered Christ to be in error: but the error was in himself. Parker did not believe in the possibility of miracles: but the Bible contained accounts of miracles. The Bible therefore must be pronounced, to a great extent, fabulous. But miracles *are* possible; miracles are actual, palpable realities, and Parker's objection falls to the ground. Many smatterers in science object to the credibility of the gospel history on the same ground, and are answered in the same way.

Some objections to the Bible and Christianity originate in misinterpretations of portions of the Bible. The Scriptures are made answerable for foolish doctrines which they do not teach. Some objections seem based on a wilful misconstruction of passages of Scripture. Many objections owe their force to wrong theories of Divine inspiration, and to erroneous notions with regard to the design of the Sacred Scriptures put forth by certain divines. These are obviated by the rejection of those unwarrantable theories and erroneous ideas, and the acceptance of better ones. Many get wrong notions about what constitutes the *perfection* of the Bible, and look in the Scriptures for a *kind* of perfection which is impossible in a book written in human language, and meant for the instruction and education of imperfect human beings. There is not a language on earth that is absolutely perfect, nor is it likely that there ever was, or ever will be, such a language. An absolutely perfect book therefore in any human language is an impossibility. But no such thing as an absolutely perfect book is necessary or desirable, any more than an absolutely perfect body or soul, or an absolutely perfect church or ministry. There is a kind of imperfection in God's works which constitutes their perfection. There is a kind of perfection talked about by metaphysical divines, which would be the extreme of imperfection. We have reason to be thankful that there is no such perfection either in Nature or the Bible. Nature and the Bible would be worthless if there were. But there is a practical perfection, a perfection of *usefulness*, in both; a perfection of adaptation to the accomplishment of the highest and most desirable objects: and that is enough.

Hosted by Google

The principal objects for which the Bible was written were, 1. To make men wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. 2. To furnish God's people unto every good work. 3. To support them under their trials, and to comfort them under their sorrows, on their way to heaven. No higher or more desirable ends can be conceived. And it answers these ends, whenever its teachings are received and obeyed. And this is true, substantial perfection. This is the reasoning of the Psalmist. "The law of the Lord is *perfect*," says he, and the proof he gives is this, "*it converteth the soul.*" "The testimony of the Lord is sure, *making wise the simple.* The statutes of the Lord are right, *rejoicing the heart.* Moreover by them is Thy servant warned, and in keeping of them there is great reward." This is all the perfection we need.

14. Spiritualism had something to do with my conversion. I know the strong feeling prevailing among many Christians against spiritualism, but I should feel as if I had not quite done my duty, if I did not, to the best of my recollection, set down the part it had in the cure of my unbelief. My friends must therefore bear with me while I give them the following particulars:—

As I travelled to and fro in America, fulfilling my lecturing engagements, I met with a number of persons who had been converted, by means of spiritualism, from utter infidelity, to a belief in God and a future life. Several of those converts told me their experience, and pressed me to visit some medium myself, in hopes that I might witness something that would lead to my conversion. I was, at the time, so exceedingly skeptical, that the wonderful stories which they told me, only caused me to suspect them of ignorance, insanity, or dishonesty; and the repetition of such stories, to which I was compelled to listen in almost every place I visited, had such an unhappy effect on my mind, that I was strongly tempted to say, "All men are liars." I had so completely forgotten, or explained away, my own previous experiences, and I was so far gone in unbelief, that I had no confidence whatever in anything that was told me about matters spiritual or supernatural. I might have the fullest confidence imaginable in the witnesses when they spoke on ordinary subjects, but I could

Hosted by Google

not put the slightest faith in their testimony when they told me their stories about spiritual matters. And though fifty or a hundred persons, in fifty or a hundred different places, without concert with each other, and without any temptation of interest, told me similar stories, their words had not the least effect on my mind. The most credible testimony in the world was utterly powerless, so far as things spiritual were concerned. And when the parties whose patience I tried by my measureless incredulity, entreated me to visit some celebrated medium, that I might see and judge for myself, I paid not the least regard to their entreaties. I was wiser in my own conceit than all the believers on earth.

At length, to please a particular friend of mine in Philadelphia, I visited a medium called Dr. Redman. It was said that the proofs given through him of the existence and powers of departed spirits were such as no one could resist. My friend and his family had visited this medium, and had seen things which to them seemed utterly unaccountable, except on the supposition that they were the work of disembodied spirits.

When I entered Dr. Redman's room, he gave me eight small pieces of paper, about an inch wide and two inches long, and told me to take them aside, where no one could see me, and write on them the names of such of my departed friends as I might think fit, and then wrap them up like pellets and bring them to him. I took the papers, and wrote on seven of them the names of my father and mother, my eldest and my youngest brothers, a sister, a sister-in-law, and an aunt, one name on each; and one I left blank. I retired to a corner of the room to do the writing, where there was neither glass nor window, and I was so careful not to give any one a chance of knowing what I wrote, that I wrote with a short pencil, so that even the motion of the top of my pencil could not be seen. I was besides entirely alone in that part of the room, with my face to the dark wall. The bits of paper which the medium had given me were soft, so that I had no difficulty in rolling them into round pellets, about the size of small peas. I rolled them up, and could no more have told which was blank and which was written on, nor which, among the seven I had

Hosted by Google

written on, contained the name of any one of my friends, and which the names of the rest, than I can tell at this moment what is taking place in the remotest orbs of heaven. Having rolled up the papers as described, I laid them on a round table, about three feet broad. I laid on the table at the same time a letter, wrapped up, but not sealed, written to my father, but with no address outside. I also laid down a few loose leaves of note paper. The medium sat on one side the table, and I sat on the other, and the pellets of paper and the letter lay between us. We had not sat over a minute, I think, when there came very lively raps on the table, and the medium seemed excited. He seized a pencil, and wrote on the outside of my letter, wrong side up, and from right to left, so that what he wrote lay right for me to read, these words: "I CAME IN WITH YOU, BUT YOU NEITHER SAW ME NOR FELT ME. WILLIAM BARKER." And immediately he seized me by the hand, and shook hands with me.

This rather startled me. I felt very strange. For WILLIAM BARKER was the name of my youngest brother, who had died in Ohio some two or three years before. I had never named him, I believe, in Philadelphia, and I have no reason to suppose that any one in the city was aware that I had ever had such a brother, much less that he was dead. I did not tell the medium that the name that he had written was the name of a brother of mine; but I asked, "Is the name of this person among those written in the paper pellets on the table?"

The answer was instantly given by three loudish raps, "Yes."

I asked, "Can he select the paper containing his name?"

The answer, given as before, was "Yes."

The medium then took up first one of the paper pellets and then another, laying them down again, till he came to the fifth, which he handed to me. I opened it out, and it contained my brother's name. I was startled again, and felt very strange. I asked, "Will the person whose name is on this paper answer me some questions?"

The answer was, "Yes."

I then took part of my note paper, and with my left hand on edge, and the top of my short pencil concealed, I

Hosted by Google

wrote, "*Where d——,*" *intending* to write, "*Where did you die?*" But as soon as I had written "*Where d——,*" the medium reached over my hand and wrote, upside down, and backwards way, as before,—

"*Put down a number of places, and I will tell you.*"

Thus answering my question before I had had time to ask it in writing.

I then wrote down a list of places, four in all, and pointed to each separately with my pencil, expecting *raps* when I touched the right one; but no raps came.

The medium then said, "Write down a few more." I then discovered that I had not, at first, written down the place where my brother died: so I wrote down two more places, the first of the two being the place where he died. The list then stood thus:—

SALEM,
LEEDS,
RAVENNA,
AKRON,
CUYAHOGA FALLS,
NEW YORK.

The medium then took his pencil, and moved it between the different names, till he came to CUYAHOGA FALLS, which he scratched out. That was the name of the place where he died.

I then wrote a number of other questions, in no case giving the medium any chance of knowing by any ordinary means what I wrote, and in every case he answered the questions in writing as he had done before; and in every case but one the answers were such as to show, both that the answerer knew what questions I had asked, and was acquainted with the matters to which they referred.

When I had asked some ten or a dozen questions, the medium said, "There is a female spirit wishes to communicate with you."

"Is her name among those on the table?" I asked.

The answer, in three raps, was, "Yes."

Hosted by Google

"Can she select the paper containing her name?" I asked.

The answer again was, "Yes."

The medium then took up one of the paper pellets, and put it down; then took up and put down a second; and then took up a third and handed it to me.

I was just preparing to undo it, to look for the name, when the medium reached over as before, and wrote on a leaf of my note paper—

"IT IS MY NAME. ELIZABETH BARKER."

And the moment he had written it, he stretched out his hand, smiling, and shook hands with me again. Whether it really was so or not, I will not say, but his smile seemed the smile of my mother, and the expression of his face was the old expression of my mother's face; and when he shook hands with me, he drew his hand away in the manner in which my mother had always drawn away her hand. The tears started into my eyes, and my flesh seemed to creep on my bones. I felt stranger than ever. I opened the paper, and it was my mother's name: ELIZABETH BARKER. I asked a number of questions as before, and received appropriate answers.

But I had seen enough. I felt no desire to multiply experiments. So I came away—sober, sad, and thoughtful.

I had a particular friend in Philadelphia, an old unbeliever, called Thomas Illman. He was born at Thetford, England, and educated, I was told, for the ministry in the Established Church. He was remarkably well informed. I never met with a skeptic who had read more or knew more on historical or religious subjects, or who was better acquainted with things in general, except Theodore Parker. He was the leader of the Philadelphia Freethinkers, and was many years president of the Sunday Institute of that city. He told me, many months before I paid my visit to Dr. Redman, that *he* once paid him a visit, and that he had seen what was utterly beyond his comprehension,—what seemed quite at variance with the notion that there was no spiritual world,—and what compelled him to regard with charity and forbearance the views of Christians on that subject. At the time he told me of these things, I

Hosted by Google

had become rather uncharitable towards the Spiritualists, and very distrustful of their statements, and the consequence was, that his account of what he had witnessed, and of the effect it had had on his mind, made but little impression on me. But when I saw things resembling what my friend had seen, his statements came back to my mind with great power, and helped to increase my astonishment. But my friend was now dead, and I had no longer an opportunity of conversing with him about what we had seen. This Mr. Illman was the gentleman mentioned on a former page, whom I attended on his bed of death.

The result of my visit to Dr. Redman was, that I never afterwards felt the same impatience with Spiritualists, or the same inclination to pronounce them all foolish or dishonest, that I had felt before. It was plain, that whether their theory of a spirit world was true or not, they were excusable in thinking it true. It *looked* like truth. I did not myself conclude from what I had seen, that it was true, but I was satisfied that there was more in this wonderful universe than could be accounted for on the coarse materialistic principles of Atheism. My skepticism was not destroyed, but it was shaken and confounded. And now, when I look back on these things, it seems strange that it was not entirely swept away. But believing and disbelieving are habits, and they are subject to the same laws as other habits. You may exercise yourself in doubting till you become the slave of doubt. And this was what I had done. I had exercised myself in doubting, till my tendencies to doubt had become irresistible. My faith, both in God and man, seemed entirely gone. I had not, so far as I can see, so much as "a grain of mustard seed" left. So far as religious matters were concerned, I was insane. It makes me sad to think what a horrible extravagance of doubt had taken possession of my mind. A thousand thanks to God for my deliverance from that dreadful thraldom.

15. I have been asked how I meet my own old objections to the Divine authority of the Bible. I answer, some of them originated in misinterpretations of Scripture. Others originated in mistakes with regard to the character

Hosted by Google

of Christ. Some things which I regarded as defects in Christ were, in truth, excellencies. Some were based on mistakes with regard to the truth of certain doctrines, and the value of certain precepts. I looked on certain doctrines as false, which I now am satisfied are true; and I regarded certain precepts as bad, which I am now persuaded are good. Some things which I said about the Bible were true, but they proved nothing against its substantial perfection and divinity. Much of what I said in my speech at Salem, Ohio, about the imperfection of all translations of the Scriptures, the various readings of Greek and Hebrew manuscripts, the defects of Greek and Hebrew compilations, and the loss of the original manuscripts, was true; but it amounted to nothing. It disproved the unguarded statements of certain rash divines; but it proved nothing against the divine inspiration or substantial perfection of the Bible as taught in the Bible itself, and as held by divines of the more enlightened and sober class. That which is untrue in what I wrote about the Scriptures is no longer an obstacle to my faith, now that I see it to be untrue. And those remarks which are true in my writings on the Bible give me no trouble, because my faith in Bible inspiration is of such a form, that they do not affect it. They might shake the faith of a man who believes in a kind of inspiration of the Bible which is unscriptural, and in a kind of perfection of the Book which is impossible; but they do not affect the faith of a man who keeps his belief in Bible inspiration and Bible perfection within the bounds of Scripture and reason.

And here I may say a few words about the objections I advanced in my debate with Dr. Berg.

1. The great mass of those objections prove nothing against the Bible itself, as the great and divinely appointed means of man's religious instruction and improvement. They simply show that the theory held by Dr. Berg about the inspiration and absolute perfection of the book was erroneous. If Dr. Berg had modified his notions, and brought them within Scriptural bounds, this class of objections would all have fallen to the ground.

2. But some of my statements were untrue and unjust. For instance, in one case I said, 'The man who forms his

Hosted by Google

ideas of God from the Bible can hardly fail to have blasphemous ideas of Him.' Now, from the account of the Creation in Genesis, to the last chapter in Revelation, the one grand idea presented of God is that He is good, and that His delight is to do good,—that He is good to all, and that His tender mercies are over all His works. Whatever may be said of a few passages of dark or doubtful meaning, the whole drift of the Bible is in accordance with that wonderful, that unparalleled oracle of the Apostle, 'GOD IS LOVE.'

3. Another statement that I made was, that the man who studies God in Nature, without the Bible, is infinitely likelier to get worthier views of God, than he who gets his ideas of God from the Bible without regard to Nature. Now the truth is, no man *can* get his ideas of God from the Bible without regard to Nature; for the Bible constantly refers to Nature as a revelation of God, and represents Nature as exhibiting the grandest displays of God's boundless and eternal goodness. The Bible and Nature are in harmony on the character of God. The only difference is, that the revelations of God's love in the Bible, and especially in Christ, are more striking, more overpowering and transforming than those of Nature. And lastly, the notions of God entertained by those who have the light of Nature alone, are not to be compared with the views entertained by those who form their views of God from the Bible alone, or from the Bible and Nature conjoined.

4. One of my strongest objections was based on the 109th Psalm. This Psalm contains strong expressions of revenge and hatred towards the enemy of the Psalmist. The answer to this objection is,

1. That the Psalmist is not set up as our great example, and that his utterances are not given as the highest manifestation of goodness.

2. The Psalms are exceedingly instructive and interesting, and must have been of immense value, both as a means of comfort and improvement, to those to whom they were first given; but the perfection of divine revelation was yet to come. The Psalms are of incalculable value still, but they are not our standard of the highest virtue. John the

Hosted by Google

Baptist was greater, higher, better than the Psalmist; yet the least of the followers of Jesus is higher than he.

3. But thirdly; we must not conclude that the feelings and expressions of the Psalmist were wicked, merely because they fell short of the highest Christian virtue. 'Revenge,' says one of our wisest men, 'is a wild kind of justice;' but it *is* justice notwithstanding, when called forth by real and grievous wrong. It is goodness, though not goodness of the highest kind. It is virtue, though not perfect Christian virtue. And the revenge of the Psalmist was provoked by wrong of the most grievous description. Read the account of the matter given in the Psalm itself. 'Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise; for the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause. For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer. And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.' This was injustice, ingratitude, cruelty of the most grievous kind. And these wrongs had been continued till his health and strength were reduced to the lowest point. 'I am gone,' says he, 'like the shadow when it declineth. My knees are weak; my flesh faileth; so that when men look at me, they shake their heads.'

And a similar cause is assigned for the revengeful expressions in the 69th Psalm. There we find the persecuted Psalmist saying, "They that hate me, and would destroy me, are my enemies wrongfully, and they are many and mighty. Then I restored that which I took not away. For *thy sake* have I borne reproach: the reproaches of them that reproached thee are fallen upon me. I was the song of the drunkards. Reproach hath broken my heart; and I am full of heaviness: and I looked for some one to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but none appeared." Thus the men that wronged and tormented the Psalmist were enemies to God and goodness, as well as to himself.

We know that the virtue of the injured and tormented Psalmist was not the virtue of the Gospel; but it *was* virtue. It was the virtue of the law. And the law was

Hosted by Google

holy, just, and good, so far as it went. If the resentment of the Psalmist had been cherished against some good or innocent man, it would have been wicked; as it was, it was righteous. True, if the Psalmist had lived under the better and brighter dispensation of Christianity, he would neither have felt the reproaches heaped on him so keenly, nor moaned under them so piteously, nor resented them so warmly. He might then have learned

> "To hate the sin with all his heart,
> And still the sinner love."

He might have counted reproach and persecution matters for joy and gladness. And instead of calling for vengeance on his enemies, he might have cried, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." But the Psalmist did *not* live under the dispensation of the Gospel. He lived under a system which, good as it was, made nothing perfect. And he acted in accordance with that system. And the intelligent Christian, and the enlightened lover of the Bible, will not be ashamed either of the Psalmist, or of the Book which gives us the instructive and interesting revelations of his experience.

5. Another of my objections to the Bible was grounded on the statement, that God visits the iniquities of the fathers on the children. But it is a fact, first, that children *do* suffer through the sins of their fathers. The children of drunkards, thieves, profligates, all suffer through the misdoings of their parents. It is also a fact, that men generally suffer through the misdoings of their fellow-men. We all suffer through the vices of our neighbors and countrymen. The sins of idlers, spendthrifts, misers, drunkards, gluttons, bigots, persecutors, tyrants, thieves, murderers, corrupt politicians, and sinners of every kind, are in this sense visited on us all. And we derive advantages on the other hand from the virtues of the good. And it would be a strange world, if no one could help or hurt another. It is better things are as they are. The advantages we receive from the good, tend to draw us to imitate their virtues. The sufferings entailed on us by the bad, tend to deter us from their vices.

Hosted by Google

And so it is with parents and children. Children are specially prone to imitate their parents. If they never suffered from the evil ways of their parents, they would be in danger of walking in those ways themselves for ever. When they suffer keenly from their parents' misdoings, there is ground to hope that they will themselves do better. I have known persons who were made teetotalers through the sufferings brought on them by the drunkenness of their fathers. And on the other hand; the blessings entailed on children by the virtue of their parents, tend to draw them to goodness. And I have known fathers, who would venture on evil deeds when they thought only of the suffering they might bring on themselves, who have been staggered, and have shrunk from their contemplated crimes, when they have thought of the ruin they might bring on their children. And where is the good parent who is not more powerfully stimulated to virtue and piety by thoughts of the blessings which he may secure thereby to his offspring? The whole arrangement, by which our conduct is made to entail good or evil on others, and by which the conduct of others is made to entail good or evil on us, tends to engage us all more earnestly in the war with evil, and to make us labor more zealously for the promotion of knowledge and righteousness among all mankind.

6. Another of my objections to the Bible was based on those passages which represent God as causing men to do bad deeds. Joseph tells his brethren, that it was not they, but God, who sent him into Egypt. David says, 'Let Shimei curse; for God hath bidden him.' Of course, the words of men like Joseph and David are not always the words of God. But Jesus Himself speaks of Judas as appointed or destined to his deed of treachery. What can we make of such passages? Does God make men wicked, or cause them to sin? We answer, No. How is it then? We answer, What God does is this: when men have made themselves wicked, He turns their wickedness to good account, by causing it to show itself in some particular way rather than in some other. God did not make the brethren of Joseph envious and malicious; but he caused their envy and malice to induce them to sell their brother into Egypt, rather than to kill him and throw him into a

Hosted by Google

pit. The wickedness was their own; the particular turn given to it was of God. God did not make Shimei a base, bad man; but Shimei having become base and bad, God chose that his villany should spend itself on David, rather than on some other person. God did not make Judas a thief and a traitor; but Judas having made himself so, God so places him, that his avarice, his dishonesty and his treachery shall minister to the accomplishment of a great beneficent design. God did not teach the spirits that deceived Ahab to lie; but those spirits having given themselves to lying, God chose that they should practise their illusions on Ahab rather than on others. God did not make Pharaoh mean or tyrannical; but Pharaoh having become so, God chooses to employ his evil dispositions in bringing about remarkable displays of His power. God does not make politicians corrupt; but politicians having become corrupt, God chooses to place them in positions in which they can rob, and torment, and dishonor us, and so incite us to labor more zealously for the Christianization of our country. A man becomes a thief, and says, I will rob John Brown to-night. And he places himself in the way along which he expects John Brown to pass, and prepares himself for his deed of plunder. But God does not wish to have John Brown robbed; so He arranges that David Jones, a man whom he wishes to be relieved of his money, shall pass that way, and the thief robs *him*. The dishonesty is the thief's own, but it is God that determines the party on whom it shall be practised.

I have a bull-dog that would worry a certain animal, if I would take it where the animal is feeding. But I choose to bring it in view of another animal which I wish to be destroyed, and he worries that. I do not make the bull-dog savage; but I use his savagery for a good purpose, instead of letting him gratify it for an evil one. This view of things explains a multitude of difficult passages of Scripture, and enables us to see wisdom and goodness in many of God's doings, in which we might otherwise fancy we saw injustice and inconsistency.

I have not time to answer all my old objections to the Bible, advanced in the Berg debate, nor have I time to

Hosted by Google

answer any of them at full length: but I have answered the principal ones; and the answers given are a fair sample of what might be given to all the objections.

As for the objections grounded on little contradictions, on matters of little or no moment, they require no answer. Whether the contradictions are real or only apparent, and whether they originated with copyists, translators, or the original human authors of the Books in which they are found, it is not worth our while to inquire. They do not detract from the worth of the Bible one particle, nor are they inconsistent with its claims to a super-human origin.

And so with regard to the expressions scattered up and down the Scriptures in reference to natural things, which are supposed to be inconsistent with the teachings of modern science. They are, in our view, of no moment whatever. Men writing or speaking under divine impulse, with a view to the promotion of religion or righteousness, would be sure, when they alluded to natural things, to speak of them according to the ideas of their times. Their geography, their astronomy, and even their historical traditions, would be those of the people among whom they lived. Their spirit, their aim, would be holy and divine.

Nor have we any reason to wish it should be otherwise. Nor had our old theologians ever any right, or Scriptural authority, for saying it was, or that it ought to be, otherwise. To us it is a pleasure and an advantage to have a record of the ideas, of the first rude guesses, of our early ancestors, with regard to the wonders and mysteries of the universe, and of the events of 'the far backward and abyss of time.' It comforts us, and it makes us thankful, to see from what small and blundering beginnings our numberless volumes of science have sprung. And it comforts us, and makes us thankful, to see how the first faint streaks of spiritual and moral light, that fell on our race, gradually increased, till at length the day-spring and the morning dawned, and then the full bright light of the Sun of Righteousness brought the effulgence of the Perfect Day.

And here perhaps may be the place for a few additional remarks on Divine inspiration.

We may observe, in the first place, that a man moved

Hosted by Google

to speak by the Holy Spirit, will, of course, speak for holiness. His aim will be the promotion of true religiousness, and this will be seen in all he says. He may not be a good scholar. He may not speak in a superhuman style. His reasoning may not be in strict accordance with the logic of the schools. His dialect may be unpolished. He may betray a lack of acquaintance with modern science. He may not be perfect even in his knowledge of religion and virtue. But he will show a godly spirit. The aim and tendency of all he says will be to do good, to promote righteousness and true holiness.

And so if a man be moved to *write* by the Holy Spirit, there will be an influence favorable to holiness in all he writes. His object will be good. If he be a scholar, he will unconsciously show his learning; if he be a man of science, he may show his science. If he be ignorant of science, his ignorance may show itself. The Spirit of Holiness will neither remove his ignorance nor conceal it: it will not make him talk like a learned man or a philosopher; but it will make him talk like a saint, like a servant of God, and a friend of man. His writings will breathe the spirit and show the love of holiness, and a tendency to all goodness.

And these are just the qualities we see in the Bible. It breathes a holy spirit. It tends to promote holiness. The writers were not all equally advanced in holiness; hence there is a difference in their writings. They were not alike in their mental constitutions or their natural endowments. They were not equal in learning, or in a knowledge of nature, or in general culture. They differed almost endlessly. And their writings differ in like manner. But they all tend to holiness. Some of the writers were poets, and their writings are poetical. Others were not poets, and their writings are prose. The poets were not all equal. Some of them were very good poets, and their writings are full of beauty, sublimity and power. Others of them were inferior poets, and their compositions are more coarse, or more formal. Some of the writers were shepherds or herdsmen, and their writings are rough and homely. Some of them were princes and nobles, scholars and philosophers, and their writings are richer and more polished. Some of

Hosted by Google

them were mere clerks and chroniclers, and their writings are dry and common-place; others were fervid, powerful geniuses, and their works are full of fire and originality. Their thoughts startle you. Their words warm you. They are spirit and life. All the writers show their natural qualities and tempers. All exhibit the defects of their learning and philosophy. All write like men,—like men of the age, and of the rank, and of the profession, and of the country, to which they belong. They write, in many respects, like other men. The thing that distinguished them is, a spirit of holiness; a regard, a zeal, for God and righteousness, and for the instruction and welfare of mankind. In their devotion to God and goodness they are all alike, though not all equal; but in other respects they differ almost endlessly. In their devotion to God and goodness, they are *unlike* the mass of pagan worldly writers, but not so unlike them in every other respect.

The divine inspiration of the sacred writers, or their wondrous zeal for righteousness, is hardly a matter for dispute. It is a simple, plain, palpable matter of fact. We see it on almost every page of their writings. We feel it in almost every sentence.

Take the account of Creation in Genesis. No one could have written that document under the influence of an ungodly or unholy spirit. It speaks throughout with the utmost reverence of God. It represents Him as acting from the best and noblest feeling. He works, not for His own interest or honor, but solely for the purpose of diffusing happiness. He not only does the greatest, the best, the noblest things, but He does them with a hearty good will. Every now and then He stops to examine His works, and is delighted to find that everything is good. It is plain He *meant* them to be good. He creates countless multitudes of happy beings, and does it all from impulses of His own generous nature. All living things are made to be happy, and all nature is made and adapted to minister to their happiness. And when at length He has completed His works, crowning all with the creation of man, He looks on all again, and with evident satisfaction and delight, declares them all very good.

Read the account of His creation of man. "And God

Hosted by Google

said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day." There can be no mistake as to the spirit and disposition of the Great Being whom we see working, and hear speaking, in this passage. Everything savors of pure and boundless love.

1. He makes man male and female, that they may have the comfort and advantages of society, and of love and friendship in their highest, holiest, and most intimate form.

2. Then He makes them in His own image, which, whatever else it may mean, means ungrudging and unbounded goodness on His part. There can be nothing higher, greater, better, happier than God. To make man in His own image, and to appoint him, so far as possible, to a like position, and a like lot with Himself, was the grandest display of goodness possible.

3. And He gives the man and woman dominion over every living thing,—makes them, next to Himself, lords of the universe. And He blesses them, speaks to them sweet good words; and His blessing maketh rich and adds no sorrow. He encourages them to be fruitful; to multiply, and replenish the earth, and to subdue it,—to turn it ever more to their advantage. He in effect places all

Hosted by Google

things at their disposal; every green herb, bearing seed, and every tree yielding fruit, is given to them for food; and they are at the same time given for food to every beast of the field, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth on the face of the earth. A richer, sweeter story,—a story of more cheerful, generous liberality,—a picture more creditable or honorable to God, one cannot imagine.

And the story is all of a piece. There is not a jar in it from first to last. Its consistency is complete. Whatever else may be said of the author of this account, it is certain that he was moved by a Holy Spirit, that he had the loftiest and worthiest views of God, and that he loved Him with all his heart and soul. He believed in a good and holy God, and in a good and holy life.

I say nothing about the harmony or discord between this account of Creation, and the facts of Geographical, Astronomical, or Geological science. I do not trouble myself about such matters. To me it is a question of no importance or concern whatever. And I have no trouble about the interpretation of the story.

It wants no interpretation. It is as plain as the light. And I take it in its simple, obvious, literal, natural sense. I keep to the old-fashioned meaning—the meaning generally given to it before the disputes about Geology and Astronomy seemed to render a new and unnatural one necessary. The days of the story are natural days, and the nights are natural nights. The length of each of the six days was the same as that of the Sabbath day. The seven days made an ordinary week. The first verse does not refer to a Creation previous to the week in which man was made. It is a statement of the work of Creation in general, of which the verses following give the particulars. All the work that is spoken of was believed by the writer to have been begun and ended in six ordinary natural days.

As to whether the story be literally or scientifically correct or not, I do not care to inquire. I am satisfied that it is the result of divine inspiration—that he who wrote it or spoke it was moved by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit of truth, of love, of purity, of holiness pervades it from beginning to end. It does justice to God; it bears be-

Hosted by Google

nignly on man; it favors all goodness. I see, I feel the blessed Spirit in every line, and I want no more.

We are told that there are *two* accounts of Creation, and that on some points they differ from each other. For anything I know this may be the case. But one thing is certain, they do not differ in the views they give of God or of His objects. They both represent Him as a being not only of almighty power and infinite wisdom, but of pure, unsullied, boundless generosity. In truth, the only impulse to Creation that presents itself is, the natural, spontaneous goodness of the Creator. And on some points the manifestations of God's love and purity, of His righteousness and holiness, are more full and striking in the second account than in the first. God's desire for the social happiness of man comes out more fully. Man, according to this second account, is made previous to woman, and permitted for a time to experience the sense of comparative loneliness. He is left to look through the orders of inferior creatures, in search of a mate, and permitted to feel, for a moment, the sense of disappointment. At length he is cast into a deep and quiet sleep, and when he awakes, his mate, his counterpart, an exact answer to his wants, his cravings, perfect in her loveliness, stands before his eyes, and fills his soul with love and ecstacy. Marriage is instituted in its purest and highest form. The law of marriage is proclaimed, which is just, and good, and holy in the highest degree. Provision is made for the comfort and welfare of the new-created pair. Their home is a paradise, or garden of delights; their task is to dress it and to keep it. Their life is love. The *general* law under which they are placed is made known to them, and they are graciously warned against transgression. The law is the perfection of wisdom and generosity. It allows them an all but unlimited liberty of indulgence. They may eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden but one. Indulgence must have its limits somewhere, or there could be no virtue, and without virtue there could be no true happiness.

Law, trial, and temptation are all essential to virtue and righteousness. Here they are all supplied; supplied so far as we can see, in their best and most considerate forms. No law is given to the lower animals. No self-denial is required

Hosted by Google

of them. They are incapable of virtue or righteousness, and are therefore left lawless. A *child* left to himself would bring his mother to shame; a man left to himself would rush headlong to destruction. But birds and beasts do best when left to themselves, or when left to the law in their own natures. Their instincts, or God's own impulses, urge them ever in the right direction, and secure to them the kind and amount of happiness they are capable of enjoying. They are incapable of virtue, so they are made incapable of vice. They cannot share the highest pleasures; they shall not be exposed therefore to the bitterest pains. Man is capable of both virtue and vice, and he must either rise to the one or sink to the other. He cannot stay midway with the lower animals. Man must be happy or miserable in a way of his own; he cannot have the portion of the brute. He must either be the happiest or the most miserable creature on earth. He must either dwell in a paradise, or writhe in a purgatory. He must either live in happy fellowship with God, or languish and die beneath his frown. And in the nature of things, the possibility of one implies liability to the other. This is man's greatness, and bliss, and glory, that he is capable of righteousness; capable of fellowship, unity, with God; and capable of progress, improvement, without limits, of life without end, and of happiness without bounds.

All this, which is the perfection of true philosophy, the sum of all true wisdom and knowledge, is presented in the most striking, astounding, and intelligible form in this second, or supplementary account of creation. Duty is defined in the clearest manner. It is enjoined in the plainest terms. The results of transgression are foretold with all fidelity. The great principle is revealed that righteousness is life and happiness, and that sin is misery and death. And man is left to his choice.

Here we have the substance, the elements, of all knowledge, of all law, of all duty, of all retribution. We have the principles of the divine government. We have the substance of all history. We have in substance, the lessons, the warnings, the counsels, the encouragements, the prophecies and revelations of all times and of all worlds. The tendency of the whole story is to make us feel that righteousness is

Hosted by Google

the one great, unchanging and eternal good; and that sin, unchecked indulgence, is the one great, eternal, and unchanging curse. The spirit of the story, its drift, its aim, is *holiness* from first to last. The writer is moved throughout by the Holy Spirit—the Spirit of truth and righteousness—the Spirit of God. We see it, we feel it, in every part. We want no proof of the fact in the shape of miracle; the proof is in the story itself. It is not a matter of dispute; it is a matter of plain unquestionable fact. And that the story is essentially, morally, and eternally true, is proved by all the events of history, by all the facts of consciousness, and by the laws and constitution of universal nature.

And in the history of man's first sin as here given, and in the account of its effects, and in the conduct of God to the sinning pair, I find, not the monster fictions of an immoral and blasphemous theology, but the most important elements of moral, religious, and physical science. And instead of feeling tempted to ridicule the document, I am constrained to gaze on it with the highest admiration and the profoundest reverence for its amazing wisdom.

As to whether the account of the creation of the man and the woman, and the story of the forbidden fruit, and of the serpent, and of the tree of life, are to be taken literally or allegorically, I have no concern at present. My sole concern with it is that of a Christian teacher and moralist. The only question with me is: 'Is it divinely inspired? Does the writer speak as a man moved by the Holy Spirit? Is it the tendency of the story to make men lawless, recklessly self-indulgent, regardless of God and duty; or is it the tendency of the story to make men fear God and work righteousness?' And that is a question answered by the story itself. On other matters the author writes as a man of his age and country; on this, the only matter of importance, he writes as a man moved by the Spirit of God.

And what I say of the accounts of Creation, I say of the history of Cain and Abel, of Enoch and Job, of Noah and the Flood, of Abraham and Lot, of Moses and his laws, and of the Hebrews and their history, of the Psalms and Proverbs, of the Prophets and Apostles. All have one aim and tendency; all make for righteousness. The writers are all moved by one Spirit—the Spirit of holiness.

Hosted by Google

With the exception of the Book called Solomon's Song, and some other unimportant portions of the Bible, the Scriptures all bear unquestionable marks, are full from Genesis to Revelations, of proofs indubitable, that they are the products of divine inspiration; that their authors wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Whatever their rank or profession, whatever their position or education, whatever their age or country, whatever their particular views on matters of learning or science, the sacred writers all speak as men under holy, heavenly influences, and their writings, however they may differ in style, or size, or other respects, are all, "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

16. I have been asked why I do not publish a refutation of my former reasonings one by one, and a full explanation and defence of my present views. I answer, my only reason for not doing this, so far as it is really desirable, is a want of time. I did something in this line in my *Review*. I have done a little more in my lectures on the Bible and on Faith and Science, and I hope, in time, to do more.

17. I have been asked again, why I shun discussion on the subject. I answer, I have never done so. When those who invite me to lecture wish me to allow discussion, I comply with their wishes. I agreed to a public discussion at Northampton; but the person who was to have met me drew back. Again, if any one really wishes to discuss with me, he can do so through the press. I published my views in my *Review* thirteen or fourteen years ago. I have published many of them since in a number of pamphlets, giving all as good an opportunity of discussing them as they can wish. And there is not the same necessity for a man who has published his views through the press, to invite discussion on the platform, as there is for a man who has *not* given his views through the press.

The following letter, written to a friend in Newcastle-on-Tyne, may explain my views on this point a little more fully:—

My dear Sir,—In answer to your question whether I

Hosted by Google

will meet the Representative of Secularism in debate, I would say, that I had rather, for several reasons, spend what remains of my life and strength in peaceful labors as a preacher, a lecturer, and an author. I seem to have done enough in the way of public discussion. And I have not the amount of physical or nervous energy, or the strength of voice and lungs, which I once had. I am suffering, not only from the effects of age, but from a terrible shock received in a collision on the railway, causing serious paralysis of my right side, and greatly reducing the force and action of my heart and brain.

Then I am not the representative of the Church, or of any section of it. I can only stand forth as the advocate of my own views. Further; there are many questions connected with the Bible, which appear to me more fitted for quiet thought and friendly discussion among scholars and critics, than for debate in a popular audience. On many of those points Christian divines differ among themselves. They differ, for instance, to some extent, in their views of Bible inspiration and the sacred canon; they differ as to the worth of manuscripts, texts, and versions, the validity of various readings, the origin and significance of discrepancies in some of the historical and chronological portions of the Bible, &c., &c. On none of these points do I consider myself called upon to state or advocate any particular views.

There are however points of a broader and more important character, on which a public popular discussion might be proper and useful; such as the general drift and scope of the Bible, or its aim and tendency; the character and tendency of Christianity as presented in the life and teachings of its Author, and in the writings of the Apostles; the comparative merits of Christianity, and of Atheistic Secularism as set forth in the writings of Secularists.

I understand the leaders of the Secularists to teach, that Christianity is exceedingly mischievous in its tendency,—that it is adverse to civilization, and to the temporal interests of mankind generally,—that the Bible is the curse of Europe, &c. These are subjects on which a popular audience may be as well qualified to judge, as scholars and critics. And if you particularly desire it, I will authorize

Hosted by Google

you to arrange for a discussion on them between me and such representative of Secularism as you may think fit. I should not however like the discussion to occupy more than three nights in any one week. And I should wish effectual precautions to be taken to secure a peaceful and orderly debate. It will be necessary also to have the subjects to be discussed plainly and definitely stated.

Yours, most respectfully,

JOSEPH BARKER.

18. I may now add, that the evidences which had most to do in convincing me of the truth and divinity of Christianity, were the internal ones. I was influenced more by moral and spiritual, than by historical and critical considerations. I do not think lightly of Paley's works on the Evidences, or of Miall's *Bases of Belief*, or of Dr. Hopkins', or Dr. Channing's, or Dr. Priestley's *Evidences of Christianity;* but the Bible, and especially the story of Christ, was the principal instrument of my conversion. I believed first with my heart rather than my head. True, my head soon justified the belief of my heart: but my heart was first in the business. I believe in miracles; I think them of great importance. I believe especially in the miracles of Christ. But that which melted my heart; that which won my infinite admiration; that which filled me with unspeakable love and gratitude; that which made me a Christian and a Christian believer, was Christ himself. Even His miracles moved me more as expressions of His love, than as proofs of His power. The great thing that overpowered me was the infinite excellency of Christ, and the wonderful adaptation of Christianity to the spiritual and moral, the social and physical, wants of mankind. Christ Himself is His own best advocate. His life and character are His strongest claims on our love and loyalty. And His religion, like the sun, is its own best evidence of its divinity. The infinite worth of the sun—the astonishing and infinitely varied adaptation of his light and warmth to the wants of every living thing—his wonderful and beneficent effects on plants and trees, on animals and man, are the strongest proofs of His Divine original. And so with Christianity, the Sun of the moral and spiritual world. It proves its heavenly

Hosted by Google

origin by its amazing adaptation to man's nature, and by its almighty tendency to promote his improvement and perfection; by the light, the life, the blessedness it gives; by the love it kindles; by the glorious transformations which it effects in depraved individuals and degenerate communities; by the peace, the hope, the joy it inspires; and by the courage and strength it imparts both in life and in death.

19. The form in which Christianity presented itself to me, and the way in which it operated on my soul, may be seen from the articles I wrote on "Christ and His teachings," about the time of my conversion. They refer to the doctrine of Christ with regard to a Fatherly God, and His loving care of His creatures. The first thing that struck me in this doctrine was its beauty and tenderness. It is just the kind of doctrine which the hearts of the best of men would wish to be true. It answers to the weaknesses and the wants of our nature; to the longings and aspirations of our souls. It is full of consolation. It makes the universe complete. It makes man's life worth living. It makes the greatness, the vastness, the infinitude of our intellectual and affectional nature a blessing. It gives peace —the peace that passes understanding. It gives joy,— the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. It opens our lips in the sight of sorrow, and enables us to give the sufferer consolation. It gives the universe a head. It gives it unity. It gives to man a Ruler. It gives to law a commanding force. It gives to conscience a controlling power. It makes virtue duty, while it gives to it fresh grandeur and beauty. It exalts it in our eyes; and it endears it to our hearts. And it furnishes the all-perfect example. And it makes reasonable the inculcation of humility and charity, of forbearance and forgiveness. And it dignifies the work of beneficence. It makes us the allies and fellow-workers of the infinite. It makes us one with Him. In teaching the ignorant, in bringing back the erring, in strengthening the weak, in reforming the vicious, in cheering the sad, in blessing the world, we are working as children in fellowship with their infinite Father, and the pulses of our generous nature beat in harmony with the living, loving, all-pervading Spirit of the universe.

Hosted by Google

And while it brightens the present, it gilds the future. It makes a blessed immortality a natural certainty. If God our Father lives, then we His children shall live also. Death is abolished. Day dawns at last on the night of the grave. Earth is our birth-place and our nursery; death is the gate-way to infinity, and there is our glorious and eternal home. Our work for ever is the joyous work of doing good. Our future life is an eternal unfolding, and a delightful exercise, of our highest powers. The mysteries of universal nature open to our view, and in the confluence of the delights of knowledge and the transports of benevolence, our joy is full; our bliss complete.

This doctrine, in the form in which Jesus presents it, has hold of the hearts of nearly the whole population of Christendom. It has the strongest hold on the best. Even those who doubt it, doubt it with a sigh; and those who give it up, surrender it with regret. And as they make the sacrifice the earth grows dark. And life grows sad. And nature wears the air of desolation. The music of the woods becomes less sweet. The beauty of the flowers becomes less charming. There creeps a dreary silence over land and sea. Existence loses more than half its charms. The light of life burns dim. The past, the present, and the future all are cheerless. The world is one vast orphan-house. Mankind are fatherless. Our dearest ones are desolate. And language has no word to comfort them. The lover sighs. The husband and the father weeps. The bravest stand aghast. The charm of life, the unmixed bliss of being, is no more.

But the question of questions is, Is the doctrine true? The *heart* says it is, and even the intellect acknowledges that there are ten thousand appearances in nature which cannot be accounted for on any other principle. We cannot at present dwell on the subject; but the doctrine of Jesus with regard to God and immortality is the grandest and most consoling, and is the most adapted to strengthen the soul to duty, and to cheer and support it under suffering, that the mind of man can conceive.

And then as to Jesus Himself, the love and the reverence with which He is honored by so large a portion of the foremost nations of the earth, are no mistake,—no accident.

Hosted by Google

They are the natural result of His worth and excellency. They are the natural response of the generous heart of humanity, to its wisest Teacher, its loftiest Example, and its greatest Benefactor. The devoutest love, the liveliest gratitude, the richest honors, the costliest offerings are his, —He deserves them all. And His name shall remain, and His fame shall spread, as long as the sun and moon endure.

All nations love and adore the good. Men will even die for them. What wonder then that Jesus should be so loved? What wonder that so many tongues should praise Him, so many hearts adore Him, and so many nations bow before Him, and accept Him as their Lord? For He devoted Himself to the service, not of a class or a nation, but of the world. The sick, the poor, the ignorant, the fallen; the little innocent children, the wronged and outcast woman, the hated Samaritan, the despised Pagan, the obnoxious publican, the youthful prodigal, the dying penitent, the cruel persecutor, all shared His love, His pity, and His prayers. He lived, He taught, He died for all.

20. The first Christians that invited me to preach were the Methodist Reformers of Wolverhampton. The next were the Primitive Methodists of Tunstall and Bilston. The Primitive Methodists at Tunstall invited me to join their community, and as soon as I consistently could, I did so. I was afterwards accepted as a local preacher. My labors as a preacher and lecturer have been mostly in connection with that community. I was specially struck with the zeal, the labors, and the usefulness of the Primitive Methodists while on my way from the wilds of error; and my intercourse with its ministers and members since I became a Christian, has proved to me an unspeakable comfort and blessing. I have received from them the greatest kindness: and I pray God that I may prove a comfort and a blessing to them in return.

21. I had great sacrifices to make when I renounced my connection with the unbelievers and became a Christian, and for some time I and my family had experience of severe trials. We had to give up our old business, and it seemed impossible to obtain a new one, and for a time we

Hosted by Google

were threatened with the bitterness of want. We were unwilling to ask a favor of any Christian party, lest our motives for embracing Christianity should be suspected; and at times I felt perplexed and sad. One day my eldest son, seeing I was depressed, said, "Father, dear, don't be troubled. We must trust in God now. I *do* trust in Him; and I am so happy to think that we are all Christians, that I can bear anything." God bless his dear good soul. We did trust in God, and He sustained us. He supplied our wants. He overruled all things for our good. And we can now say, "The lines have fallen to us in pleasant places; we have a goodly heritage."

22. I have met with some unpleasantnesses since my return to Christ; but I am not sure that they are worth naming; and for the present they shall remain unnamed. I have met with many things of a very pleasant character. Thousands that followed me into doubt have come back with me to Christianity. Thousands that were sinking, were saved by my conversion. I believe I may say thousands of unbelievers that were not led into doubt by me, have been redeemed from their wretchedness through my example and labors. Some young ministers have been kept from rash and ruinous steps by the story of my experience. Many believers have been strengthened in their faith and encouraged in their Christian labors under my sermons and lectures. Many have been benefited by my publications. My family has been greatly comforted and blessed. The power of the infidel class has been diminished. I have myself enjoyed a kind and a degree of happiness that I never enjoyed while the slave of doubt and unbelief. And it is a great consolation to think that I was brought to God while in my health and strength, and that I have now been permitted to spend from eleven to twelve years in the work of Christ. Another great comfort is, that my circumstances are such as to enable me to give some proof of my devotion to the cause of Christ; of my infinite preference of the religion of Christ, both to the miserable philosophy of unbelief, and to the wretched fictions of ignorant or anti-Christian divines.

23. I read quite a multitude of books on my way back to Christ, and if I had time, I would give some account of the

Hosted by Google

influence which some of them made on my mind. But I have not. It may seem strange, but I had sunk below the level of ancient Paganism, and the books which I read on my first awaking to a consciousness that I was wrong, were Pagan works. I read much in Plato and Aristotle, Cicero and Seneca, for a time, and then in Plutarch, M. A. Antonine, and Epictetus. The works of Epictetus, with the comments of Simplicius, proved exceedingly profitable. I then read the writings of Theodore Parker, Dr. Channing, and some of the works of Dr. Priestley, and got good from all. They all helped to inspire me with a horror of Atheism, and to strengthen my faith in God, and in His boundless and eternal love. I next read a number of my own works, beginning with those that were somewhat skeptical, and reading backwards, to those which were Christian. I then read freely my old companions and favorites, including Hooker, Baxter, and Howe; Jeremy Taylor, William Law, and Bishop Butler. I read Shakespeare freely, and Pope, and then Thomson, and Goldsmith, and Young, and Cowper, and Tennyson, and several others of our poets. Then came the works of Carlyle, Burke, Penn, and Wesley; of Robert Hall, and Dr. Cooke, and Mr. Newton; and the writings of Paley and Grotius. I also read Guizot's *History of Civilization*, and those portions of Dr. Henry's *History of England* that referred to the Church and Christianity. Still later I read Augustine's *Confessions*, Montalembert's *Monks of the West*, and everything I could find to illustrate the history of Christianity.

I was delighted, transported, with many of Wesley's hymns. I found in them an amount of truth, and beauty, and richness of good feeling, I had never found in them before. I read many of the hymns of Watts with great pleasure, as well as several collections of hymns and poetry by Roundell Palmer and others. I also read the writings of Chalmers, Whewell, and Lord Brougham on natural theology, and the works of several other authors on that subject.

At a later period I read something in Neander, Lange, and others on the life of Christ. Still later I read Young's *Christ of History*, with Renan and *Ecce Homo*. Renan

Hosted by Google

tried me very much. He seemed to write in the scoffing spirit of Voltaire, and I laid the book aside before I got to the end. *Ecce Homo* delighted me exceedingly. I read it a dozen times. I studied it, and it did me a great deal of good. It both strengthened my faith in Christ, and increased my love to Him. Still later I read *Ecce Deus* with pleasure and profit.

The book however that did me most good was the Bible. I came to it continually, as to an overflowing fountain, and drank of its waters with ever-increasing delight.

24. I began to preach before I was fit; but I never might have been fit, if I had not begun. I became fit by working while unfit. And my imperfect labors proved a blessing to many.

25. There was much prejudice against me at first; but not more than I had reason to expect; and it gradually gave place to confidence and kind feeling. Some said I ought to remain silent a few years; but as I did not know what a few years or even a few days might bring forth, I thought it best to speak at once. I had spoken freely enough on the wrong side, and I saw no reason why I should not speak as freely and at once on the right side. Nor do I regret the course I took. It was the best. Some that thought otherwise at first, think as I do now. For instance, when Mr. Everett first heard that some of his friends had invited me to preach for them, he was very angry, and said I ought never to speak or show my face again in public as long as I lived. In less than four years he came to hear me, was much affected, shook me by the hand, thanked me, invited me to his house, showed me his library, and his museum of Methodist antiquities and curiosities, offered me a home in his house, and was as kind to me as a father.

I never quarrelled with people for regarding me with distrust or fear, though I often checked my over-zealous friends, who were disposed to quarrel with all who did not regard me with the same amount of love and confidence as themselves.

I have never defended myself against slanderers, either by word or writing, except when justice to my friends has seemed to require it.

Hosted by Google

I have never complained of any disadvantages under which I have labored. It is right that a man who has erred as I have, should have something unpleasant in his lot to remind him of his error, and render him more careful and prayerful for the time to come: and there is to me a pleasure in doing penance for my faults.

26. I have never thrown the whole blame of my errors on others, nor have I ever seen reason to take the whole to myself. God alone is able to distribute praise and blame, rewards and punishments, according to men's deserts, and to Him I leave the task. At first I was disposed to be very severe towards myself: but two years' experience in the religious body that I first joined, of a kind of treatment resembling that of my early days, satisfied me that I ought to judge myself a little more leniently. I would not however be unduly severe towards others. I cannot tell, when a man does me wrong, how far he may be under the influence of unavoidable error, and how far he may be under the influence of a wicked will. I may be able to measure the injustice of the act, but not the wickedness of the actor. God alone can do that. A man's treatment of me may satisfy me that I ought not to place myself in his power; but cannot justify me in saying of him that he deserves the damnation of hell. The rule with regard to men's deserts is, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

27. But when I have made the most liberal allowance for myself, and even while I feel satisfied that in my investigations my object was the discovery of truth, and that my errors were wholly unintentional, I must still feel ashamed and mortified at the thought that I was so weak as to be capable of such grievous errors. Even when I take into account the imperfection of my education, and the disadvantages of my situation, and all the temptations by which I was assailed, I am still ashamed and humbled, and feel that my place is in the dust. But if, while prostrate, God says to me, "Arise!" shall I resist the call? If in the exercise of His love He restores to me the joys of His salvation, and bids me speak and labor in His cause, shall I not thankfully obey the heavenly voice? Shall I carry my humility to the extreme of disobedience? Shall I not rather arise, and, with a cheerful and joyous

Hosted by Google

heart, do my Saviour what service I can? I will not presume to usurp the prerogative of God, even to judge and punish myself. I will leave myself to Him, the merciful and all-knowing, and He shall do with me what He sees best. I will not reject His mercy. I will not resist His will. Let Him do what seemeth to Him good, whether it be in the way of tenderness or of severity. It has pleased Him, thus far, to mingle much compassion with His chastisements, and His goodness calls for gratitude and joy.

28. And as I act towards God, I will act towards His people. If they frown on me, I will take it patiently; but if they welcome me with demonstrations of affection, I will rejoice. If they close their pulpits against me, I will say, "Your will be done." If they open them to me, I will enter, and, to the best of my ability, declare the counsel of God. A portion of God's people,—a large and most worthy portion—have received me graciously; and my duty is, and my endeavor, I trust, will be, to reciprocate their love and confidence. I say with the poet:—

"People of the living God,
I have sought the world around,
Paths of doubt and sorrow trod,
Peace and comfort nowhere found;
Now to you my spirit turns,
Turns, a fugitive unblest;
Brethren, where your altar burns
O receive me to your rest.

"Lonely I no longer roam,
Like the cloud, the wind, the wave;
Where you dwell shall be my home,
Where you die shall be my grave;
Mine the God whom you adore,
Your Redeemer shall be mine;
Earth can fill my heart no more,
All my joys shall be divine."

29. It seems strange that I should have been permitted to wander into doubt and unbelief, and live so long under

Hosted by Google

its darkness and horrors. There is a mystery about it that I cannot understand. But what I know not now, I may know hereafter. The mystery of Job's trial was explained when his afflictions were at an end. The mystery of my strange trial is still wrapt up in darkness. True, my strange experience has not been an unmixed calamity. It has brought me advantages which I could not otherwise have enjoyed. I know things which I never could have known, if I had always remained within the enclosures of the Church, and under the influence of Christianity. And my heart is more subdued to the will of God. I am more at one with Him than I ever was before. I love Him more. I love Jesus more. I love His religion more. I have a clearer view and a fuller knowledge of its infinite worth. I have, of course, a fuller knowledge of the horrors of infidelity. And my faith in God and Christianity rests on a firmer foundation than it did in my early days. Many things which I once only *believed*, I now *know*. Many things for which I had formerly only the testimony of others, I now know to be true by my own experience. There are quite a multitude of things on which I have greater certainty, and on which I can, in consequence, speak with more authority than in my early days. There are, too, cases of doubt which I can meet, which formerly I could not have met. I can make more allowances too, than formerly, for those who are troubled with doubt, or ensnared by error. And my preaching, in some cases, is more powerful. And I am more free from bigotry and intolerance. While I see more to love and admire in the Church generally, I love *all* hard-working churches without partiality. I think less of the points on which they differ, and more of the points on which they agree. They appear to me more as one church. There are many points on which I might once have engaged in controversy, which now appear of little or no moment. While I have more zeal for God, I have more charity for men.

There are many things in Wesley's hymns, and many things in other hymns, which formerly I did not understand or appreciate, or understood and appreciated but very imperfectly, which now I understand more perfectly, and prize more highly. And so with many things in the Bible.

Hosted by Google

30. And I have, at times, and have had for years, strange glimpses of the magnificence and wondrousness of the universe; startling views of the awful grandeur and movements of its huge orbs, and of the terrible working of its great forces, and an overpowering sight and sense of the presence and power of the living God in all, which I never had in my earlier days. And I have often had, and still have, at times, strange feelings of the fact and mystery of existence: of my own existence, and of the existence of other beings, and of God.

31. And I have, at times, strange feelings with regard to the infinite value of life and consciousness, and of my intellectual and moral powers. And I have pleasant and wonderful thoughts and feelings with regard to the lower animals, as the creatures of God, my Father; and as manifestations of His goodness, and wisdom, and power; and as sharers with me of an infinite Father's love. And I love them as I never loved them in my earlier days. I feel happier in their company. I listen with more pleasure to the songs of birds, and gaze with more delight on every living thing. The earth and its inhabitants are new to me. The plants and flowers are new. The universe is new. I am new to myself. All things are new. It seems, at times, as if the new, enlarged, and higher life of which I have become conscious through my strange experience, were worth the fearful price which I have paid for it.

32. But then again I think of the time I spent in sin and folly,—of the mischief I did in those dark days,—of the grief I caused to so many good and godly souls,—of the sorrows I entailed on those most dear to me, and of the terrible disadvantages under which I labor, and under which I must always labor, in consequence of my unaccountable errors, and I am confounded and dismayed. But then, on the other hand, I am reminded that I did not sin wilfully,—that I did not err purposely or wantonly,—that what I did amiss I did in ignorance,—that I verily believed myself in the way of duty when I went astray,—that I was influenced by a desire to know the truth,—that I believed myself, at the outset, bound as a Christian, and as a creature of God, to use my faculties to the utmost in

Hosted by Google

searching the Scriptures, and exploring Nature, in pursuit of truth,—that when I advocated infidel views, I advocated them believing them to be true, and believing that truth must be most conducive to the virtue and happiness of mankind. True, appearances were against me; but I felt myself bound, even when an unbeliever, to "walk by faith,"—by faith in principles which I supposed myself to have found to be true. My life, even in my worst condition, was a life of self-sacrifice for what I regarded as eternal truth. When I gave up my belief in a Fatherly God, and my faith in a blessed immortality, I believed myself to be making a sacrifice at the shrine of truth. I thought I heard her voice from the infinite universe demanding the surrender, and conscience compelled me to comply with the demand. I felt the dreadful nature of the sacrifice, but what could I do?

I remember the words I uttered, and I remember the mingled emotions which filled and agitated my soul, on that occasion. I was distressed at the terrible necessity of giving up the cherished idols of my soul, yet I was filled for a moment with a strange delight at the thought that I was doing my duty in compliance with the stern demands of eternal law, and the dread realities of universal being. And I hoped against hope that the result would all be right.

I weep when I read the strange words which I uttered on that dark and terrible occasion. I said to myself, "The last remains of my religious faith are gone. The doctrines of a personal God, and of a future life, I am compelled to regard as the offspring, not of the understanding, but of the imagination and affections. It is no easy matter to wean one's-self from flattering and long cherished illusions. It is no easy matter to believe that doctrines which have been almost universally received, and which have been so long and so generally regarded as essential to the virtue and happiness of mankind—doctrines, too, which have mingled their mighty influences with so much of the beautiful and sublime in human history, and which still, to so many, form all the poetry and romance, almost all the interest and grandeur and blessedness of human life, have no foundation in truth. To persons who believe in a

Hosted by Google

Fatherly God, and in human immortality, pure naturalism is terribly uninviting. It was always so to me. I well remember the mingled horror and pity with which, when a Christian, I regarded the man who had no personal God, and no hope of a future life. I remember too how I wrote or spoke of such. I mourned over them as the most hapless and miserable of all living beings. Yet I myself have come at length, by slow degrees, after a thousand struggles, and with infinite reluctance, to the dread conclusion, that a personal God and an immortal life are fictions of the human mind. Yet existence has not quite lost its charms, nor life its enjoyments. There is something infinitely grand, and unspeakably exciting and elevating in the consciousness of having made a sacrifice of the most popular and bewitching of all illusions, out of respect to truth. It was an enviable state of mind which prompted the grand and thrilling exclamation, "Let justice be done, though the heavens should fall." And that state of mind is no less enviable which can sustain a man in the sacrifice of God and immortality at the shrine of truth. Such a sacrifice, accompanied, as it must be in the present state of society, with a thousand other sacrifices of reputation, friendships, popular pleasures, and social favor, is an exercise of the highest virtue, a demonstration of the greatest magnanimity, and is accompanied or followed with an intensity of satisfaction which none but the martyr-spirit of truth can conceive. It is often said by Christians, that the reason why persons doubt the existence of God and a future life is, that they have good cause to dread them; or, as Grotius expresses it, that they live in such a way that it would be to their interest that there should be no God or future life. This was not the case with me. My unbelief came upon me while I was diligently striving in all things to do God's will. My virtue outlived my faith.

"Born of Methodist parents, and reared under Christian influences, and a Christian myself, and even a Christian minister for many years, I was brought slowly and reluctantly, in spite of a world of prejudices, and in spite of interests and associations and tastes all but almighty in their influence, to the conclusion, that pure, unmixed

Hosted by Google

Naturalism alone accorded with what was known of the present state and the past history of the universe. I say I was brought to these conclusions in spite of a world of opposing influences. While a Christian, all that the world could promise or bestow seemed to be within my reach. Friends, popularity, wealth, power, fame; and visions of infinite usefulness to others, and of unbounded happiness to myself in the future, were all promised me as the reward of continued devotion to the cause of God and Christianity. As the reward of heresy and unbelief, I had to encounter suspicion, desertion, hatred, reproach, persecution, want, grief of friends and kindred, anxious days and sleepless nights, and almost every extreme of mental anguish. Still, inquiry forced me into heresy further and further every year, and brought me at length to the extreme of doubt and unbelief."

It was, then, in no light mood that I gave up my faith in God, and Christ, and immortality. The change in my views was no headlong, hasty freak. It was the result of long and serious thought—of misguided, but honest, conscientious study. And hence I have sometimes thought, and am still inclined to think, that God had a hand in the matter—that He led me, or permitted me to wander, along that strange and sorrowful road, and to pass through those dreary and dolorous scenes, and drink so deeply of so dreadful a cup of sorrow, for some good end. "He maketh the wrath of man to praise Him," and perhaps he may turn our errors also to good account. I am not disposed to believe that my life has been a failure. It may, for anything I know, prove to have been a great success. "Men are educated largely by their mistakes," says one. It hardly seems likely that God would suffer a well-intentioned, though weak and erring child, to ruin either himself or others for ever. God is good, and the future will justify His ways, and all His saints shall praise Him.

My business meanwhile is, to do what I can to promote the interests of truth, and the welfare of mankind. I must, so far as possible, redeem lost time. I have a thousand causes for gratitude, and none for complaint. I am very happy, in general; as happy as I desire to be, and as happy, I expect, as it is good for me to be. I sometimes

Hosted by Google

feel as if I were *too* happy. And I certainly never ask God to make me *more* happy. I ask Him to make me wiser, and better, and more useful, but not more happy. At times my cup of joy runs over. It is strange it should be so, yet so it is. But joy and sorrow are often found in company. Paul says of himself, "Sorrowful, yet always rejoicing." The author of *Ecce Deus* says, "The good man's life is one unbroken repentance. Throughout his life he suffers on account of his sins. What, then of joy?" he asks: and he answers, "It is contemporaneous with sorrow. They are inseparable. The joy that is born of sorrow is the only joy that is enduring." It may seem strange, but it is true, the last year of my life has been the happiest I ever experienced.

CHAPTER XX.

A FEW OF THE LESSONS I HAVE LEARNED ON MY WAY THROUGH LIFE.

And now for a few of the lessons which I have learned on my way through life.

1. One, alas! is, that it is very difficult to bring young people to benefit by the experience of their elders. It would be a happy thing if we could put old men's heads on young men's shoulders; but no method of performing the operation has, as yet, been hit upon. It might answer as well, if old men could empty their heads into the heads of the young. But this is a task almost as difficult as the former. The heads of the young are generally full of foolish thoughts, and vain conceits, and wild dreams of what they are to be, and do, and enjoy in the days to come, with large admixtures at times of more objectionable materials; so that there is no room for the counsels and admonitions of their elders. Then there are some who do not *like* to be counselled or admonished. Having set their minds on the attainment of a certain object, they are unwilling to listen to any but such as commend their course, and encourage them with promises of success. There are

Hosted by Google

others who think they have no need of counsel or admonition. Counsel and admonition are proper enough for some people, but they are not required in their case, they imagine. They do not exactly think themselves beings of a superior order, beyond the reach of ordinary dangers; but they *act* as if they thought so. In words they would acknowledge themselves to be but men, liable to the common frailties of their race; but their conduct seems to say, "It is impossible *we* should ever err or sin as some men do: we are better constructed, and are born to a happier lot." Their purpose is to do right, and it never enters their minds that they can ever do wrong. And if you tell them that they are in danger of becoming intemperate, or skeptical, or of falling into any great error or sin, they feel hurt, and say, "Do you suppose we are dogs that we should do such things?" Dogs or not, when the time of trial comes, they do them. And then they discover, that men are not always so wise, so good, or so strong as they suppose themselves; that people may be the subjects of weaknesses of which they are utterly unconscious, till assailed by some unlooked for temptation; and they mourn at the last, and say, "How have we hated instruction, and despised the counsel of the Holy One." And now they see that the strongest need a stronger one than themselves to shield them, and that the wisest need a wiser one than themselves to guide them, if they are to be kept from harm.

We have no disposition to be severe with such persons, for we belonged to the same unhappy class ourselves. It never once entered our minds in our earlier days, that we could ever fall away from Christ. We saw that others were in danger, but we never supposed we were in danger ourselves. We preached from the text, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall," and we pressed the solemn warning on our hearers with the greatest earnestness; but we never applied it to ourselves. We supposed ourselves secure. And if any one had told us that we should one day cease to be a Christian, and above all, if any man had said that we should fall into unbelief, and be ranked with the opponents of Christianity, we should have thought him insolent or mad. Yet we know what followed. We cannot therefore deal harshly with our too

Hosted by Google

self-confident brethren. But we must give them faithful warning. Be on your guard, my dear young friends. You are not so free from defects, nor so far from danger, as your conscious innocence, or the great deceiver, may insinuate. There may be tendencies to evil within you, and temptations in the mysterious world around you, of the character and force of which you have no conception. It was as great and good a man as you perhaps that said,

"Weaker than a bruised reed,
Help I every moment need."

And he was wise that said,—

"Beware of Peter's words,
Nor confidently say,
'I never *will* deny thee, Lord;'
But, 'Grant I never may.'"

There are devices of the wicked one of which you are not yet aware; "depths of Satan" which you have not yet fathomed; and terrible possibilities of which, as yet, you have never dreamed. I say again, Be on your guard. "Be not high-minded, but fear." "Blessed is the man that feareth always." None are so weak as those who think themselves strong. None are in such danger as those who think themselves secure.

Man, even at best, is not so great, so wise, so strong, as some are prone to suppose: and when, cut off from Christ and His people, from the Bible and prayer, he trusts in his own resources, he is poor, and weak, and frail in the extreme. There are no errors, no extravagances, no depths of degradation, into which the lawless self-reliant man may not fall. When I had lost my faith in Christ, and had freed myself from all restraints of Bible authority and Church discipline, I said to myself, "I will be a MAN; all that a man acting freely, giving his soul full scope, tends naturally to become; and I will be nothing else." I had come to the conclusion that man was naturally good—that, when freely and fully developed, apart from the authority of religion, churches and books, he would become the per-

Hosted by Google

fection of wisdom, and goodness, and happiness. I said to myself, "Christ was but a man; and the reason why He so much excelled all other men was, that He acted freely, without regard to the traditions of the elders, the law of Moses, or any authority but that of His own untrammelled mind. I will follow the same course. I will free myself from the prejudices of my education, from the influence of my surroundings, and from the authority of all existing laws and religions, and be my own sole ruler, my own sole counsellor, my own sole guide. I will act with regard to the religion of Christ, as Christ acted with regard to the religion of Moses; obey it, abolish it, or modify it, as its different parts may require. I will act with regard to the Church authorities of my time as Jesus acted with regard to the Scribes and Pharisees of His day; I will set them aside. I will be a man; a free, self-ruled, and self-developed man."

Alas, I little knew the terrible possibilities of the nature of man when left to itself. I had no conception of its infinite weakness with regard to what is good, or its fearful capabilities with regard to what is bad. I had no idea of the infinite amount of evil that lay concealed in the human heart, ready, when unrepressed, to unfold itself, and take all horrible forms of vice and folly. I indulged myself in my mad experiments of unlimited freedom till appalled by the melancholy results. I did not become *all* that unchecked license could make me; but I became so different a creature from what I had anticipated, that I saw the madness of my resolution, and recoiled. I came to the verge of all evil. God had mercy on me and held me back in spite of my impiety, or I should have become a monster of iniquity. Man was not made for unlimited liberty. He was made for subjection to the Divine will, and for obedience to God's law. He was made for fellowship with the good among his fellow-men, and for submission to Christian discipline. He can become good and great and happy only by faith in God and Christ, by self-denial, by good society, by careful moral and religious culture, and by constant prayer and dependence on God. I now no longer say, "I will be a *man*;" but, "Let me be a Christian." I no longer say, "I will be all that my na-

Hosted by Google

ture, working unchecked, will make me;" but, "Let me be all that Christ and Christianity can make me. Let me check all tempers at variance with the mind of Christ; and all tendencies at variance with His precepts. Let the mouth of that fearful abyss which lies deep down in my nature be closed, and let the infernal fires that smoulder there be utterly smothered; and let the love of God and the love of man reign in me, producing a life of Christ-like piety and beneficence. Let all I have and all I am be a sacrifice to God in Christ, and used in the cause of truth and righteousness for the welfare of mankind."

The enemy of man has many devices. In my case, as in the case of so many others, he transformed himself into "an angel of light." He did not say, "Give up your work: forsake Christ; desert His Church; indulge your appetites; give yourself to selfish, sensual pleasure; free yourself from religious restraint, from moral control, from scruples of conscience, and live for gain, or fame, or power." On the contrary; his counsel was, "Perfect your creed; perfect your knowledge; reform the Church; expose its corruptions; reform the ministry; expose its errors; go back to the simplicity of Christ; return to the order of the ancient Church; pay no regard to prevailing sentiments, or to established customs; begin anew. Resolve on perfection; it is attainable; be content with nothing less. Assert your rights. Be true. Prove all things; hold fast to what is good, but cast away whatever you find to be evil. Call no one master but Christ; and what Christ requires, ask no one but yourself. Be true to your own conscience. God has called you to restore the Church to its purity, to its simplicity, to its ancient power. Be faithful, and fear no opposition. Free inquiry must lead to truth, and truth is infinitely desirable. Assail error; assail men's inventions; spare nothing but what is of God. It is God's own work you are doing; it is the world's salvation for which you are laboring; and God's own Spirit will guide you, and His power will keep you from harm." All this was true; but it was truth without the needful accompaniment of pious caution. It was true, but it was truth without the needful amount of humility, of meekness, of gentleness, and of self-distrust. It was truth, but it

Hosted by Google

was truth put in such a form as to do the work of falsehood. It was an appeal to pride, to self-conceit, to self-sufficiency. It was truth presented in such a shape, as to abate the sense of my dependence on God; as to make me forgetful of my own imperfections; as to exclude from my mind all thoughts of danger, and so prepare me for mistakes, mishaps, and ultimately ruin. It is not enough to aim at good objects: we must be humble; we must be sensible that our sufficiency is of God; we must be conscious of our own weakness, of our own imperfections, and of our own danger, and move with care, and watchfulness, and prayer. We must not please ourselves with thoughts of the wonders we will achieve, of the services we will render to the world, and of the honor we shall gain; but cherish the feeling that God is all, and be content that He alone shall be glorified. We are but earthen vessels; the excellency of the power is of God.

O my poor soul, how do I grieve when I think of thy early dreams, and of thy sad awakening. Like Adam, I lived in a Paradise of bliss, suspecting no evil, and dreading no change. I had been trained to piety from my earliest years. The Bible was my delight. Christ and Christianity were my glory and joy. The Church was my home. To preach the Gospel, to defend God's cause, and to labor for the salvation of the world, were the delight of my life. I was successful. I was popular. I had many friends, and was passionately beloved. Wherever I went, men hailed me as their spiritual father. The chapels in which I preached were crowded to their utmost capacity, and men regarded me as the champion of Christianity. They applauded my labors in its behalf, and testified their esteem and admiration by unmistakable signs. At one time I might have applied to myself the words of Job, "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me. The young men saw me, and gave me reverence; and the aged arose and stood up. Unto me men gave ear, and waited; and kept silence at my counsel. They waited for my words as for the showers; and opened their mouths as for the latter rain. I chose out their way, and sat chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners." And

Hosted by Google

everything seemed to foretell a continuance of my happy lot. My prejudices and my convictions, my tastes and my affections, my habits and my inclinations, my interests and my family, all joined to bind me to the cause of Christ by the strongest bonds. And I seemed as secure to others as to myself. Hence I looked forward to a life of ever-increasing usefulness, reflecting credit on my family and friends, and conferring blessings on mankind at large. I revelled in hopes of a reformed Church, and a regenerated world; and, passing the bounds of time, my spirit exulted in the prospect of a glorious immortality. Yet "when I looked for good then evil came; and when I waited for light there came darkness." I fell away. My happy thoughts, my joyous hopes, my delightful prospects, all vanished. I underwent a most melancholy transformation. The eyes that gazed on me with affectionate rapture, now stared at me with affright and terror; and brave, stout men wept over me like children. The light of my life was extinguished. My dwelling was in darkness. "I was a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls." And there was nothing before me but the dreary prospect of a return to nothingness. And can you, my young friends, dream of safety with facts like these in view? Again, I say, be on your guard. An easy, dreamy self-security is the extreme of madness. Our only safety is in watchfulness and prayer. Our only sufficiency is of God.

"O, never suffer me to sleep
Secure within the reach of hell;
But still my watchful spirit keep
In lowly awe and loving zeal:
And bless me with a godly fear,
And plant that guardian angel here."

2. The second lesson I would name is this: It is dangerous to allow bad feeling to get into your hearts towards your Christian friends, or your brother ministers. It is especially dangerous to allow it to remain there. It works like the infection of the plague. Try therefore to keep your minds in a calm and comfortable state towards all with whom you have to do. Guard against rash judgments and

Hosted by Google

groundless suspicions; or you may take offence when no offence is meant. But even when people do you harm on purpose, it is best to be forbearing. We never know the force of temptation under which men act; or the misconceptions under which they labor. We may ourselves have caused their misdoings by some unconscious error of our own. It is well to suspect ourselves sometimes of unknown faults, and to go on the supposition that what appears unkindness in others towards us, may be the result of some unguarded word or inconsiderate action on our part towards them. 2. Keep your hearts as full as possible of Christian love. The more abundant your love, the less will be your liability either to give or take offence. 3. And do not overrate the importance of men's misconduct towards you. We are not so much in the power of others as we are prone to imagine. The world is governed by God, and no one can hurt us against His will. Do that which is right, and you and your interests are secure. So take things comfortably. And try to overcome evil with good. And if you find the task a hard one, seek help from God.

3. Another lesson which I have learned on my way through life is, that it is dangerous to indulge a spirit of controversy. There may be occasions when controversy is a duty; but it is best, as a rule, just to state what you believe to be the truth, and leave it to work its way in silence. If people oppose it, misrepresent it, or ridicule it, then state it again at the proper time, with becoming meekness and gentleness, and then commit it to the care of its great Patron. It is difficult to run into controversy without falling into sin. Men need to be very wise and good to be able to go through a controversy honorably and usefully; and by the time they are qualified for the dangerous work, they prefer more peaceful employment. Controversy always tends to produce excess of warmth, and warmth of a dangerous kind. It often degenerates into a quarrel, and ends in shame. Men go from principles to personalities; and instead of seeking each other's instruction, try only to humble and mortify each other. They begin perhaps with a love of truth, but they end with a struggle for victory. They try to deal fairly at the outset, but become

Hosted by Google

unscrupulous at last, and say or do anything that seems likely to harass or injure their opponents. The beginning of strife is like the letting out of water from a reservoir; there is first a drop, then a trickle, then a headlong rushing torrent, bearing down all before it, and sweeping away men and their works to destruction. It is best, therefore, to take the advice of the proverb, and "leave off contention before it be meddled with."

4. Another lesson that I have learnt on my way through life is, that ministers should deal very tenderly with their younger brethren. They should teach them, so far as they are able, and check them when they see them doing anything really wrong; but they should never interfere needlessly with their spiritual freedom. Young men of mind and conscience *will* think. They will test their creeds by the Sacred Oracles, and endeavor to bring them into harmony with the teachings of Christ and His Apostles. And it is right they should. It is their duty, as they have opportunity, to "prove all things." And few young men, of any considerable powers, can compare the creeds which they receive in their childhood with the teachings of Sacred Scripture, without coming to the conclusion, that on some points they are erroneous, and on others defective; that on some subjects they contain too much, and on others too little. And good young men will naturally feel disposed to lay aside what they regard as erroneous, and to accept what presents itself to their minds as true. In some cases they will make mistakes. The only men that never think wrong, are those who never think at all. There never was a child born into the world that learned to walk without stumbling occasionally, and at times even falling outright. And there never was a spiritual child that learned to travel in the paths of religious investigation, without falling at times into error. But what is to be done on such occasions? What does the mother do when her baby falls? Does she run and kick the poor little creature, and say, "You naughty, dirty tike, if ever you try to walk again, I will throw you into the gutter?" On the contrary, she runs and catches up the dear little thing; and if it has hurt itself, she kisses the place to make it well, and says, "Try again, my darling; try again." And it *does* try

Hosted by Google

again: and in course of time it learns to walk as steadily as its mother; and when she begins to stagger under the infirmities of age, it takes her hand, and steadies her goings.

And so it should be in spiritual matters. When a good young man falls into error, we should treat him with the tenderness and affection of a mother. "We were gentle among you," says Paul to the Thessalonians, "even as a nurse cherisheth her children." And this is the example that we should follow towards our younger brethren. Whether we would keep them from erring, or bring them back when they go astray, we should treat them tenderly. We should try to win their love and confidence. Men can often be led, when they cannot be driven. There are numbers who, if you attempt to drive them, will run the contrary way; who, if you treat them with respect, and show them that you love them, will follow you whereever you may go.

But you must give them time. They cannot always come right all at once. When a fisherman angles for large fish, he provides himself with a flexible, elastic rod, and a good long length of line; and when he has hooked his prey, he gives it the line without stint, and allows it to dart to and fro, and plunge and flounder at pleasure, till it has tired itself well, and then he brings it to the bank with ease. If he were to attempt to drag the fish to the shore at once, by main force, it would snap his rod, or break his line, and get away into the deep; and he would lose both his fish and his tackle. And so it is in the world of mind. When we have to do with vigorous and active-minded young men, we must allow their intellects a little play. We must wait till they begin to feel their weakness. We must place a little confidence in them, and give them a chance both of finding out their deficiencies, and of developing their strength.

It would not be amiss if elder preachers could go on the supposition that they are not quite perfect or infallible themselves,—that it is possible that their brethren may discover some truth in Scripture, that has not yet found its way into their creed; or detect some error in their creed, that has lurked there unsuspected for ages. And

Hosted by Google

they ought to be willing to learn, as well as disposed to teach.

But in any case, if our studious young brethren miss their way sometimes, we must be kind and gentle towards them, and in our endeavors to save them, must proceed with care. Deal harshly with them, and you drive them into heresy or unbelief. Deal gently and lovingly with them, and you bring them back to the truth. How often the disciples of Jesus erred with regard to the nature of His kingdom, and the means by which it was to be established. Yet how patiently He bore with them. And in this, as in other things, He has left us an example that we should tread in His steps. The sun keeps the planets within their spheres, and even brings back the comets from their far-off wanderings, by the gentle power of attraction. And the Sun of Righteousness keeps His spiritual planets in their orbits, and brings from the blackness of darkness the stars that wander, by the same sweet power. And the secondary lights of the world must keep their satellites in their orbits, and bring back to their spheres the stars that fall or lose their way, by kindred influences. The mightiest and divinest power in the universe is LOVE.

5. And now comes a lesson to the young thinkers. Suppose your elder brethren should treat you unkindly; suppose they should discourage your search after truth, and require you to conform your creed to their own ideas, and your way of speaking to their own old style of expression; suppose that they should look with suspicion on your endeavors to come nearer to the truth, and, whenever you give utterance to a thought or an expression at variance with their own, should denounce you as heretics, and threaten you with excommunication, what should you do?

We answer, go quietly on in the fear of the Lord. Make no complaint, but prepare yourselves for expulsion. When expelled, go quietly to some Church that can tolerate your freedom, and work there in peace as the servants of God. Cherish no resentment. Commit your cause to God, and, laboring to do His will, leave Him to choose your lot.

Even the trials that come from the ignorance or wickedness of men, are of God's appointment. We are taught

Hosted by Google

that it was by God's ordination that Judas betrayed Christ; that God employed the wickedness of the traitor for the accomplishment of His great designs. David said, referring to Shimei, "Let him curse, for God hath commanded him." God employed the wickedness of Shimei, to try and punish David. Wesley has embodied the sentiment in one of his hymns, as follows:

"Lord, I adore Thy gracious will;
Through every instrument of ill
My Father's goodness see:
Accept the complicated wrong
Of Shimei's hand, and Shimei's tongue,
As kind rebukes from Thee."

Joseph said, God had sent him down to Egypt to save many souls alive. His wicked brethren were only the instruments of his banishment. *They* meant it for *evil, God* turned it to *good.* And so in your case: God may be using the ignorance or the wickedness of your persecutors to separate you from a body for which you are not fitted, and to place you in one where you will be more useful and more happy. When we do right, God will make the errors, and even the sins of our enemies, work for our good.

6. Another lesson which I have thoroughly learnt is, that though men may become unbelievers through other causes than vice, they cannot continue unbelievers without spiritual and moral loss. The inevitable tendency of infidelity is to debase men's souls. And here I speak not on the testimony of others merely, but from extensive observation and personal experience. I have known numbers whom infidelity has degraded, but none whom it has elevated. We do not say that every change in a Christian's belief is demoralizing. Disbelief in error, resulting from increase of knowledge, may improve his character; but the loss of faith in Christ, and God, and immortality, can never do otherwise than strengthen a man's tendencies to vice, and weaken his inclinations towards virtue. When infidels say that their unbelief has made them more virtuous, they attach different ideas to the word virtuous from those

Hosted by Google

which Christians attach to it. They call evil good, and good evil. The secularists call fornication and adultery virtue. But this is fraud. That infidelity is unfavorable to what men generally call virtue, and friendly to what men generally call vice, infidels themselves know. Their passions and prejudices may make them doubt the bad influence of their unbelief for a time, but not long. I myself questioned the downward tendency of infidelity in my own case for a time, but facts proved too strong for me in the end. My friends could see a deterioration both in my temper and conduct. And there was a falling off in my zeal and labors for the good of mankind from the first. There was a falling off even in my talents. There was a greater tendency to self-indulgence. It was owing to the still lingering influence of my early faith, and of my early Christian tastes and habits, that I was no worse. The virtue which I retained I owed to the religion on which I had unhappily turned my back. When unbelievers are moral, they are so, not in consequence, but in spite of their unbelief. When Christian believers are bad, they are so, not in consequence, but in spite of their religion. Infidelity tends to destroy conscience. It annihilates the great motives to virtue. It strengthens the selfish and weakens the benevolent affections and tendencies of our nature, and smoothes the road to utter depravity. The farther men wander from Christ, and the longer they remain away, the nearer they approach to utter degeneracy.

It seldom happens that men who have lived long under the influence of Christianity, become grossly immoral as soon as they lose their faith: but they decline in virtue from the first, and utter depravation comes in time. I have seen a tree growing prostrate on the ground, when many of its roots had been torn up from the soil; but it grew very poorly; and the growth it made was owing to the hold which the remainder of its roots still had on the soil. The branch that is cut off from the tree may retain a portion of its sap, and show some signs of languishing life for weeks; but it dies at length. And so with the branches cut off from the spiritual vine; they gradually wither and decay. The iron taken white hot from the furnace, does not get cool at once; but it gradually comes down to the

Hosted by Google

temperature of the atmosphere with which it is surrounded. The prodigal did not get through his share of his father's property in a day, but he found himself perishing of hunger at length. A man does not die the moment he ceases to eat, but he *will* die if he *persists* in his abstinence. A man may live in an unhealthy district, and breathe unwholesome air for some time, without apparent injury; but disease will show itself in the end. It is not uncharitableness that makes us speak thus, but charity itself. It is desirable, that both believers and unbelievers should know the truth on this important subject. Infidelity is the enemy of all virtue, and consequently of all happiness; and it is necessary that this should be generally and thoroughly known, and that the old-fashioned prejudice against it should be allowed to keep its ground, and remain as strong as ever. And Christians must show their charity towards unbelievers, not by abating men's horror of infidelity, but by endeavoring to deliver them from its deadly power.

7. And here comes another lesson. Do not suppose that unbelievers are irreclaimable. There is always good ground to hope for the conversion of those unbelievers who retain a respect for virtue, if they are properly treated; and even those who are sunk in vice should not be abandoned in despair. Several of those who have returned to Christ during the last ten years, were men who had gone far in various forms of wickedness. And many of those converts from infidelity of whom we read in old religious books, were persons of immoral character. And though habits of vice are not easily broken off, yet the miseries they entail on men may rouse them to more vigorous efforts for their deliverance. And it sometimes happens that those who are poor in promise, are rich in performance. You remember the Saviour's parable of the two sons. The Father said to the first, "Son, go work to-day in my vineyard." And he answered and said, "I will not," but afterwards he repented and went. And the father said to the second, "Go." And he answered and said, "I go, Sir," and went not. And this, said Christ, is what takes place between Me and mankind. I say to the fair-seeming people, "Give yourselves to God;" and they answer, "We will, Lord," but still live on in selfishness and sin.

Hosted by Google

I say to abandoned profligates, "Give yourselves to God;" and they answer, "We will not;" but on thinking the matter over, they repent and live to God. Harlots and publicans enter the kingdom of God, while scribes and pharisees remain without. The oyster, if you look at its outward covering, is a "hard case;" yet within, it is soft and tender in the extreme. The ugliest caterpillar is but an undeveloped butterfly, and in time, if placed under favorable influences, may leave its crawling, and mount aloft on wings of gold and silver. And it often happens that the worst children make the best men. The fiercest persecutor of the early Church became the chief of the Apostles. He was honest when dragging the saints to prison; and all that was wanted to make him a preacher of the faith which he labored so madly to destroy, was LIGHT.

And so it is still. Some of the most unhappy and unpromising of men and women may require but a gentle word, a glimmer of light, or a manifestation of your kind concern for their welfare, to win their hearts to God. It does not appear that any of the early Christians supposed that there was anything good in the heart of Saul the persecutor, and nothing is said of any attempt on their part to convince him of his error. And many, even when they heard he was converted, could not believe the story. And even Ananias, when told by God Himself that the converted persecutor was praying, could not get over his fears and suspicions all at once. When God said, "Go, and help the poor man," Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to Thy saints at Jerusalem." But the Lord said unto him, "Go thy way, haste to his help, for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles, and to kings, and to the children of Israel." At last Ananias went his way, and visited the praying penitent. But even after this, when Paul had been preaching for some time with great success, and had made the greatest sacrifices, and braved even death itself, in the cause of Christ, there were numbers who doubted his sincerity. "When he went to Jerusalem, and attempted to join himself to the disciples, they were all afraid of him, and did not believe

Hosted by Google

that he *was* a disciple." Barnabas however, good man, took him by the hand, and succeeded at length in obtaining for him, to some extent, the advantages of Church fellowship.

Here then we have a couple of lessons; the first is, to seek the conversion of unbelievers; the second is, to guard against an excess of skepticism in ourselves with regard to the sincerity of those who appear to be converted. It would be well in forming our judgments of persons professing religion, to follow the rule laid down by Christ, "By their fruits ye shall know them. A good tree cannot bring forth bad fruit, nor a bad tree good fruit." If men live soberly, righteously, and godly—if they make great sacrifices, and incur reproach and persecution for Christ, and labor zealously in His cause, it is no great stretch of charity to go on the supposition, that their profession of faith in God and Christ is sincere.

8. But suppose the churches should treat a convert from infidelity as the church at Jerusalem treated Paul, what should he do? We would say, Take all quietly, and go zealously on with your work. You are the servant of God, and not of man; and you must not desert your Master, because a number of His servants err in their judgment of you, or show, in their conduct towards you, a lack of charity. Serve your Redeemer all the more faithfully. This was the course which Paul took. He "increased the more in strength;" and he abounded the more in labors. It would be a poor excuse for the neglect of your duty to God and Christ, to yourselves and your fellow creatures, to say, "The churches did not treat us as kindly as they ought; they doubted our sincerity." Such conduct would not only be exceedingly wicked, but extremely foolish. It would be the surest way to confirm the doubts of the churches, and make them feel, that in treating you coldly, they had acted wisely. The surest way to gain the confidence of the Church, is not to care too much about it. If you show that you are satisfied with the favor of God, and with your own sweet consciousness of the happy change you have experienced, everything else will come in its season. Goodness will draw after it the reputation of goodness. The shadow will follow the substance. And whether

Hosted by Google

it does or not, your duty is to be resigned and cheerful. A man that has really been converted from infidelity to Christianity, will be so happy, and will feel so thankful for the blessed change, if he appreciates it as he ought, that he will hardly care whether he has the favor and confidence of his brethren or not. There is no intimation that the returned Prodigal looked black at his father, and threatened to go back again into the far country, because his elder brother refused to join in his welcome home. The probability is, that he felt so ashamed of his sin and folly, so overpowered with the tenderness of his father, and so happy to find himself at home again, that he never inquired whether other people were satisfied or not. The father noticed the unhappiness of his elder son, and sought to soothe and comfort him; but the younger son was occupied with other thoughts; and having suffered long the grievous pangs of hunger, he would, for a time at least, be busy at the table, speculating in raptures, it may be, on the difference between the flesh of "the fatted calf," and "the husks that the swine did eat."

It is, in one respect, an advantage to the converted unbeliever to be treated by the Church with shyness. It affords him an opportunity of proving his attachment to Christ and Christianity, in a way in which he could not prove it, if every one welcomed him with demonstrations of affection, and signs of joy. None are so slow to believe in the sincerity of a converted infidel as infidels themselves; and to be able to give to his old associates a proof so decisive of the genuineness of his change, and of the value he puts on Christianity, will be regarded by the convert as a privilege of no light value. And it is fit and proper, as well as better for the convert, that he should be reminded of his former weakness, and incited to watchfulness and humility, by the pain of some kind of life-long disadvantage.

9. Let no one expect to get through the world without trouble. The thing is not possible. Nor is it desirable. We *need* a little trouble now and then to keep us awake; and God will take care that we have it. We had better therefore look for it, and when it comes, bear it patiently. It is no use fretting or fuming; it only makes things worse.

Hosted by Google

When we are restless under little troubles, God sends us greater ones; and if our impatience continues, he sends us greater still. And there is no remedy. An eel may wriggle itself "out of the frying-pan, into the fire;" but it cannot wriggle itself back again out of the fire, even into the frying-pan. And so it is with us. We may wriggle ourselves out of one little trouble, into two greater ones; but we cannot wriggle ourselves back again out of the two greater ones, into the little one. The longer we resist the will of God, the worse we shall fare. We had better therefore bear the ills we have, than plunge into others that we know not of. It is best to submit at once. If we were wise we should say with the Redeemer, "The cup that My Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" God knows what is best for us, and He will never inflict on us a pang which He does not see to be necessary to our usefulness and welfare. It is not for His own pleasure that He afflicts us, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.

And sorrow is the seed of joy. And pain adds to the sweetness of our pleasures. Hunger sweetens our food, and thirst our drink, and weariness our moments of rest; and "our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

We are quite mistaken when we look at our trials as unmixed evils. They "are blessings in disguise." The dripping clouds which hide the sun, enrich the earth. The difficulties with which we have to contend, increase our strength. The tail of the kite, which seems to pull it down, helps it to rise. And the afflictions, which seem to press us to the ground, help to raise us to heaven.

Let us take our lot with meekness then, and learn in all things to say to our Heavenly Father, "Thy will be done."

10. Join the Church. The Church is an institution of Heaven, and connection with it is necessary to your spiritual safety. Some think they can stand alone; but when they make the attempt, they fall. No one can stand, who does not use the means which God has given him for his support; and one of those means is fellowship with the Church. Without civil society men gradually sink into

Hosted by Google

barbarism; and without religious society Christians sink into earthliness and impiety.

Some of the sweetest and most beautiful of our flowering shrubs, and some of the richest of our fruit-bearing trees, are unable to raise themselves from the ground without the assistance of their stronger kindred. This is the case with the honeysuckle, the ivy, and the grape vine. Left to themselves on the open plain, they sprawl upon the ground, choked with the grass, and cropped and trampled on by beasts, until at length they perish. But placed in woods or hedgerows, they clasp with their living tendrils, or embrace with their whole bodies, their vigorous neighbors, climb to the light and sunshine by their aid, display their blossoms, and bear their rich delicious fruit in full perfection. And we are like these trees. We must have support from others, or perish.

This is not all. Even the stoutest and strongest trees, such as the oak, the ash, and the sycamore, do best in company. Plant those trees in groves, and guard them from the crushing steps and greedy maws of cattle, and they grow up tall, and straight, and smooth. They shield each other from the stormy winds, and they show a sort of silent emulation, each raising its head as high as possible, to catch the freshest air and the fullest streams of light. But plant one of those trees alone in the open field, and leave it unfenced and unguarded, and the probability is, it will perish. If it should escape destruction, its growth will be retarded, and its form will be disfigured. It will have neither size nor comeliness. It will be cropped by the cattle, and bent and twisted by the winds; it will be stunted and dwarfed, crooked and mis-shapen, knotted and gnarled, neither pleasant to the eye, nor good for timber. Not one in a thousand would ever become a tall, a straight, and a majestic tree.

Mr. Darwin says, that on some large tracts on which, while they were unenclosed and unprotected, there was not a tree to be seen, there soon appeared, after the land was enclosed by a fence, a countless multitude of fine Scotch firs. The seeds of these trees had been sown by some means, and they had germinated, and the embryo trees had sprung up; but the cattle had cropped the tender shoots, or crushed

Hosted by Google

and trampled them down, and not one had been able to raise its head above the grass or heather. On looking down and searching carefully among the heather, he found in one square yard of ground, no fewer than thirty-two small trees, one of which had been vainly trying to raise its head above the heather for six and twenty years. After this tract of land had been enclosed for awhile, it was covered thick with a countless multitude of fine young trees. And so it is with Christians. Leave them in the open common of the world, and they gradually come down to a level with the tastes and manners of the world. Place them within the guarded enclosures of the Church, and they rise to the dignity and glory of saints. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." Hence "the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."

When you get into the Church, stay there as long as you honestly can; and honor it by a truly Christian life; and aid it by your labors; and support it liberally with your money. The best spent money in the world is that which is employed in promoting the spread of Christianity. And try to live in peace both with your pastor and your fellow-members. Obey the rules. Do not dream of unlimited liberty; you cannot have it; and it would do you no good if you could, but harm. And unlimited liberty for one, would be slavery or martyrdom for the rest. Judge the Church and your pastors charitably, as you would like to be judged yourself. Expect to find imperfections in them, and make as much allowance for them as you can, that they may be led to make allowances for the imperfections they find in you. Look more at the good that is in your brethren than at the evil; it will cause you to love them the more, and make you feel happier in their company. If any of them be overtaken in a fault, try to restore them, in the spirit of meekness. And let the mishaps of your brethren remind you that *you* too are exposed to temptation.

Calculate on meeting with trials or unpleasantnesses in the Church occasionally; for offences are sure to come. Churches are made up of men, and men are full of imperfections, so that misunderstandings, and even misdoings at

Hosted by Google

times, are inevitable. You may be misjudged or undervalued. There will be differences of tastes and opinions, and even clashings of interest, between you and your brethren. And trials may come from quarters from which you could never have expected them, and of a kind that you could not possibly anticipate. But make up your minds, by the help of God, to bear all patiently. Remember how God has borne with you; and consider what Jesus suffered from the weaknesses, the errors, and the sins of men; and how meekly and patiently He endured.

And understand that others may have to bear with as many unpleasantnesses from you, as you have to bear with from them. You may misunderstand or undervalue others, as much as they misunderstand or undervalue you. And others may be as much disappointed in you, as you are in them. And you may try their patience, as much as they try yours. We know when we are hurt by others, but we do not always know when others are hurt by us. And we can see the defects of others, when we cannot see our own. And we should consider, that *they* will know when they are hurt by us, when they may not know that we are hurt by them; and that they will be able to see our imperfections, when they will be quite unconscious of their own. And if we would not have them to make too much of *our* defects and blunders, we must not make too much of *theirs*. If they can bear with *us*, we must learn to bear with *them*, and think ourselves well off to have things settled so. If we could see ourselves as God sees us, we might be more astonished that others should be able to bear with us, than that we should be required to bear with them.

And the trials we meet with in the Church will do us good, if we look at them in a proper light, and receive them in a proper spirit. They will reveal to us the defects of our brethren, and draw us to labor for their improvement. And in laboring for the improvement of others, we shall improve ourselves.

And the unpleasant friction which takes place between us and our brethren, will only tend to smoothe the ruggedness of our temper, and rub off the unevennesses of our character, provided we can keep ourselves from impatience and resentment. In going along the course of a brook or

Hosted by Google

a river, you sometimes come upon a bend, where you find a heap of smooth and nicely rounded pebble stones thrown up. Did you ever ask yourselves how these pebbles came to be so round and smooth? When broken off from their respective rocks, they were as irregular in form, they had as sharp corners, and as rough, and ragged, and jagged edges, and were altogether as ugly and unsightly things as any fragments of rocks you ever looked upon. But they got into the water, and the stream rolled them along, and rubbed them gently one against another, and this was the way they came to be so round and smooth. There is no doubt, that if the stones could have talked, and if they had had no more sense than we have, whenever they found that their neighbor stones were rubbing them, they would have screamed out, "Oh! how you scratch;" never dreaming that they were scratching the other stones just as much at the same time. But fortunately the stones could not talk; and though they had not so much sense as we have, they had less nonsense, and that served them as well—so they took their rubbing quietly; and hence the smoothness of their surface, and the beauty of their shape. Now here we are, living stones in the great stream of time, tumbled about and rubbed one against another. Let us take our rubbing patiently, and give ourselves a chance of getting rid of our unevennesses, and of being brought to a comely shape. Have patience, my friends. The trouble will not continue long. When we have got our proper shape, God will remove us to our proper places in that living temple which He is building in the heavens, and our rubbing will be at an end for ever.

When I was first invited by the Primitive Methodists of Tunstall to preach in their chapel, one of the class-leaders and local preachers in the circuit threw up his plan, and sent in his class-book, saying he would not belong to a society that would allow Joseph Barker to preach in their pulpits. He was under a wrong impression with regard to my views. One of the Tunstall travelling preachers went to see him, and told him that he was laboring under a mistake, and advised him to take back his class-book and plan. "Come," said he, "and have a little talk with Mr. Barker." He came, and found he had been

Hosted by Google

mistaken. "Forgive me," said he. "I cannot," said I; "you have committed no offence. I will save my pardons till you do something really wicked." "Then let us pray," said he; and we knelt down, and prayed for one another, and we all felt better. He came that night to hear me lecture. The subject was THE CHURCH. I spoke of the unpleasantnesses with which we sometimes meet from our brethren, and while exhorting my hearers to take their trials patiently, I used the illustration I have given here. The old man sat on my left in the front of the gallery, and was much excited. He wept. At length, unable any longer to restrain his feelings, he cried aloud, "Glory; Hallelujah; I'll stop and be rubbed." He did stop. But he had not much more rubbing to endure. In less than twelve months, on retiring one night to rest, in his usual health, he passed away suddenly, and peacefully, to his rest in heaven. Let us "stop and be rubbed." Better be rubbed in the Church, than thrown out into the broad highway of the world, and broken with the strong man's hammer.

11. And now with regard to reform. It is right that we should be reformers. There are plenty of evils both in the Church and the State, as well as in individuals, and it is our duty to do what we can to abate or cure them. But there is a right and a wrong way of going about the business, and if we would avoid doing mischief while we are trying to do good, we must proceed with care.

Reformers must learn to wait as well as to work. You cannot make churches, or states, or even individuals, all that you would like them to be, in a moment. You cannot make yourselves what you would like to be as quickly as you would wish. If you are like a man that I know, you will find the improvement of your own habits, and tempers, and manners, a task for life. And if the change for the better is so slow in yourselves, whom you have in your hands continually, and with whom you can take what liberties you please, what can you expect it to be in others? It is the law of God that things shall pass from bad to good, and from better to best, by slow and almost imperceptible gradations.

All the great and beneficent operations of Nature are

Hosted by Google

silent and slow. Nothing starts suddenly into being; nothing arrives instantly at perfection; nothing falls instantly into decay. The germination of the seed, the growth of the plant, the swelling of the bud, the opening of the flower, the ripening of the fruit, are all the results of slow and silent operations. Still slower is the growth of the majestic forest. And the trees of greatest worth, which supply us with our choicest and most durable timber, have the slowest growth of all. And so it is with things that live and move. Their growth is silent as the grave. And man, the highest of created beings, advances to maturity most tardily of all. Our development is so gradual, that the changes we undergo from day to day are imperceptible. And the development of our minds is as gradual as the growth of our bodies. We gather our knowledge a thought, a fact, a lesson at a time. We form our character, a line, a trace, a touch a day.

Society is subject to the same law. Churches and nations are collections of individuals, each changing slowly, and must therefore themselves change more slowly still. You cannot force the growth of a single plant or animal at pleasure; still less can you force at will the advancement or improvement of society. You may change a nation's laws and institutions suddenly, but the change will be of no service, so long as the minds of the people remain unchanged.

All the great beneficent changes of Nature are gradual. How slowly the darkness of the night gives place to the morning dawn, and how slowly the grey dawn of the morning brightens into noon! How slowly the cold of winter gives place to the warmth of spring and summer. How slowly the seed deposited in the ground springs up, putting forth first the blade, then the ear, and then the full ripe corn in the ear. And how slowly we grow up from babyhood to manhood, and how slowly we pass on from early sprightly manhood, to the sobriety and wisdom of age. And how slowly the nations advance in science, in arts, and in commerce; in religion, and morals, and government. And so it is in all the works of God. Even the startling phenomena presented by the earth's surface, which earlier philosophers supposed to be the result of violent

Hosted by Google

and sudden convulsions, are now regarded as the result of the slow and ordinary action of natural powers. Leisurely movement is the eternal and universal law. And it is no use complaining; you cannot alter it. You cannot make a hen hatch her eggs in less than three weeks, do what you will. You may crack the shells, thinking to let the chickens out a little earlier; but you let death in, and the chickens never do come out at all. "The more haste the less speed." I have had proof of this more than once in my own experience. I once lived in a house terribly infested with rats, and I wanted to get rid of them as quick as I could, for they were a great nuisance. But I was in too big a hurry to succeed. One night I heard a terrible splashing in the water-tub in the cellar. "That's a rat," said I, "I'll dispatch that, anyhow:" and I took the lighted candle and poker, and hastened into the cellar, thinking to kill the creature at once. When the rat saw me with candle and poker, it made an extra spring, completely cleared the edge of the tub, and got safe away into its hole. I was in such a hurry to kill it, that I saved its life. When I got to it, it was drowning itself as nicely as it could do; and if I had had patience to wait, it would have been dead in ten minutes. But because I would not wait, and let it die quietly, it would not die at all. And it may be living now for anything I know, and may have bred a hundred other rats since then, and all because I would not give it time to die in peace. There are rats everywhere still. There are rats in the Church, rats in the State; rats in palaces, and rats in hovels. There are rats of despotism and tyranny, rats of slavery and war, rats of rebellion and anarchy. There are rats of superstition and idolatry, rats of heresy and infidelity, rats of intemperance and licentiousness. And it is right to try to kill them off. But we had better go to work carefully. We cannot put things right in an instant. And when wicked laws, or vicious principles have received their death blow, we had better give them time to die in quiet. Haste and impatience may spoil all.

12. Though unbelief may not always be a sin, it is always a great calamity. As we have said, its tendency is always to immorality, and immorality always tends to

Hosted by Google

misery and death. Byron perished in his prime, and his short life and his untimely death were both unhappy. Unbelievers are seldom happy in their domestic relations. And in cutting themselves off from God, they reduce the noblest affections of their souls to starvation. They have no suitable exercise or gratification for their natural instinctive gratitude, their reverence, or their love. They have nothing in which they can securely trust. Even their family and social affections often decline and die.

Many unbelievers are poor, and infidel poverty is always envious. The world is a very trying one to unbelievers: hardly anything pleases them; and nothing pleases them long. Rulers do not please them: they are despots and tyrants. Their fellow subjects do not please them: they are cowardly slaves. Their masters do not please them: they are extortioners. Their men do not please them: they are knaves. The rich do not please them: they are leeches, caterpillars, cormorants. The poor do not please them: they are mean, deceitful and dishonest. Religion does not please them; it is superstition: and philosophy does not please them; it is a bore and a sham. Priests do not please them; they are cheats: and the people do not please them; they are dupes. The climates do not suit them: they are too hot, or too cold; too damp, or too dry; and the seasons do not please them—they are always uncertain, and seldom right. The world at large disgusts them: it takes the part of their enemies. It favors the religious classes, and mocks and tortures the infidel philosopher. Their bodies are not right; they are always ailing, and threatening to give way: and their minds are not right; they are never contented and at rest. There is nothing right in the present; and there is nothing promising in the future. They think themselves the wisest people in the world, yet people in general regard them as fools; and they themselves can see that their fancied wisdom does not prove their friend.

They can give no explanation of the mysteries of the universe. They cannot account for the facts which geology reveals with regard to the natural history of the globe. They cannot account for the mechanism of the heavens, or the chemistry of the earth. They cannot account for life,

Hosted by Google

organization, or intelligence. They cannot account for instinct. They cannot account for the marks of design which are everywhere visible in Nature, nor for the numberless wonders of special arrangement and adaptation manifest in her works. They cannot account for the difference between man and the lower animals. Animals can indulge themselves freely and take no harm; man cannot indulge himself freely without misery and ruin. Animals can be happy without self-denial; man cannot. Man excels in the gift of reason, yet commits mistakes, and perpetrates crimes, which we look for in vain among the beasts of the field. Man, with a thousand times more power than the brutes, and with immensely greater capacities and opportunities for happiness, is frequently the most miserable being on earth. On the supposition that man was made for a different end, and endowed with a different nature from the brutes—on the supposition that man was made for virtue, for piety, for rational, religious self-government, for voluntary obedience to God, for the joy of a good conscience, for heaven—in a word, on the supposition that the Scriptural and Christian doctrine about man is true, all this is explained; but on the infidel theory all is a torturing, maddening mystery.

And let infidels do what they will, and say what they please, the world at large will hold to the religious theory. Mahometans, Pagans, and Christians all insist that man is made for higher work, and meant for a higher destiny, than the lower animals. The Christian theory is accepted by the highest of our race. They regard it with the deepest reverence. The books that unfold it they regard as divine. They read them in their families. They read them in their temples. They teach them in their schools. They publish them in every language: they send them round the globe. In England and America, the first of the nations, you see them everywhere. You meet with them in hotels, in boarding-houses, at railway stations, and on steam packets; in asylums and infirmaries; in barracks and in prisons; in poor-houses and in palaces; in the drawing-rooms of the wealthy, and in the hovels of the poor. The greatest scholars and rarest geniuses devote their lives to the diffusion of their doctrines;

Hosted by Google

and there is no probability of a change. If Christianity be false, the world is mad: if it be true, the case of the infidel is deplorable in the extreme.

And that many portions of the Christian system *are* true, is past doubt. They carry the evidence of their truth on their very face. And other portions admit of easy proof. The truth of many Christian doctrines can be proved by experience. And the rest are probable enough. There is nothing absurd, nothing irrational in Christianity. The teachings of Christ are the perfection of goodness. They are the perfection of wisdom and beauty. Even Gœthe could say, "The human race can never attain to anything higher than Christianity, as presented in the life and teachings of its Founder." And again he says, "How much soever spiritual culture may advance, the natural sciences broaden and deepen, and the human mind enlarge, the world will never get beyond the loftiness and moral culture of Christianity as it shines and glistens in the Gospels."—*Farhenlehre*, iii. 37.

And nothing can be more true.

Look for a few moments at Christ and Christianity.

And, first, what is Christ as presented in the Gospels?

1. He is, first, holy, harmless, undefiled; a lamb without blemish and without spot. This is the lowest trait in His character. Yet it is a great thing for any one to remain innocent in a world like this, with a nature like ours.

2. But He was, second, an example of the highest moral and spiritual excellence. He was devout, pious, resigned, towards His Heavenly Father. He was full of benevolence towards men. He did good. The happiness of mankind was the end, and doing good the business, of His life. He had no other object. He paid no regard to wealth, to power, to pleasure, or to fame. He was so fixed and single in His aim, that there is no room for mistake. To do good, to bless mankind, was His meat and drink.

3. And He did good to men's bodies as well as to their souls. While He taught the ignorant, and reformed the bad, and comforted the penitent, He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, bread to the hungry, and life to the dead.

Hosted by Google

4. He enjoined the same way of life on His disciples. "Freely ye have received," said He, "freely give."

5. While He lived and labored for the good of all, He paid special attention to the poor.

6. Yet He never flattered the poor, nor pandered to their prejudices or passions. He never taught them to envy the rich, or revile the great, or to throw the blame of their sorrows on others.

7. While kind to the poor, He was just and respectful to the rich. His conduct to Nicodemus, to Zaccheus, to the young man that came to question Him about the way to heaven, and to the Roman centurion, was courteous and comely to the last degree. He was faithful, but not harsh.

8. He was good to all classes. He loved the Jews, yet He was just and kind to the Samaritans, to the Syrophenician woman, and to the Roman soldier.

9. He was especially kind to women, even to the fallen ones. He showed none of that indifference or disdain for woman that the proud barbarian exhibits, or of that heartless contempt which the vicious sensualist manifests. He rose alike above the selfish passions and the inveterate prejudices of his age, and conferred on the injured sex the blessings of freedom and dignity, of purity and blessedness.

10. He showed the tenderest regard to children. "He took them in His arms and blessed them," and said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

11. He was kind to the outcast. He was a friend of publicans and sinners. He went among the lowest, the most neglected, the most despised, the most hated and dreaded of mankind, and labored for their salvation. The parables of the Lost Sheep, and of the Prodigal Son, speak volumes in His praise.

12. He was always gentle, tolerant, and forgiving. He refused to bring down fire from heaven on the villagers that had slighted Him, saying, "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." He commended the virtue of Samaritan heretics. He has nothing harsh even for the infidel Sadducee. He complies with

Hosted by Google

the unreasonable wishes of the skeptical Thomas. He pardons Peter. He is severe with the Scribes and Pharisees only, who made void the law of righteousness by their traditions, and took the key of knowledge, and used it, not to open, but to keep shut the door of the kingdom of heaven.

13. As a reformer, He went to the root of social and political evils, and sought the reform of laws, institutions, and governments, by laboring for the instruction and renovation of individuals.

14. He was patient as well as disinterested. He was willing to sow, and let others reap; to labor, and let others enjoy the fruits of his labors.

15. He formed a Church, employing the social instincts and affections of His followers as a means of perpetuating and extending His beneficent influence in the world.

16. He checked the impertinence, and silenced the vanity of captious cavillers.

17. He carried the truth into markets and sea-ports, as well as taught it in the temple and in the synagogues.

18. He had the eloquence of silence as well as of speech.

19. He could suffer as well as labor. He bore reproach and insolence, and at last laid down His life for mankind.

20. He could make allowances even for His murderers. When they mocked Him in His dying agonies, He could say, "Father, forgive them; they know not what they do."

He excelled as a teacher.

1. He was very practical; seeking always to bring men to be merciful, as their Father in Heaven is merciful.

2. He was very plain; using the simplest forms of speech, and the most natural and touching illustrations.

3. He presented truth and duty in His parables in the most impressive forms.

4. His doctrines about God and providence, about duty and immortality, about right worship and the proper employment of the Sabbath; about true greatness, and the forgiveness of injuries; about gentleness and toleration; about meekness and humility; about purity and sincerity, as well as on a great variety of other subjects, were the perfection of true philosophy. His parable of the talents,

Hosted by Google

His remarks on the widow and her two mites, and on the woman and the box of ointment, showing that nothing is required of us beyond our powers and opportunities, are striking, instructive, and impressive in the highest degree.

5. He made it the duty of all whom He taught to instruct others. His words, "Freely ye have received, freely give;" and the sentence, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," are among the divinest oracles ever heard on earth.

6. He illustrated and enforced all His lessons by a consistent example. He practised what He taught.

7. And He commanded His disciples to do the same. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

8. There can be nothing juster or kinder than His great rule, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them."

9. His doctrine that God will treat men as they treat each other, is most striking and important. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "With what judgment ye judge ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will forgive you your trespasses; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses."

10. His remarks on riches and poverty, on honor and reproach, on suffering and glory, though regarded by some with shyness and distrust, contain a world of important truth.

11. His lessons on spiritual or religious freedom, on self-denial, on the true mark of discipleship, on the great judgment, on the future of Christianity, and on the heavenly felicity, are all remarkable for their wisdom, and for their purifying and ennobling tendency.

But it would require volumes to do Christ and His doctrine justice. And I feel as if I were wronging the Saviour to speak of His worth and doctrine, when I have neither time nor space duly to set forth their transcendent excellency. Every peculiar trait in His character that I

Hosted by Google

have named, deserves a treatise to present it in all its importance and glory; and I, alas, can give but a sentence or two to each.*

But Christ has our devoutest love and gratitude, and our profoundest reverence. And the more we contemplate Him, the more constrained we feel to regard Him, not only as the perfection of all human excellence, but as the revelation and incarnation of the eternal God. And we feel it a great honor and unspeakable privilege to be permitted to bear His name, to belong to His party, and to labor in His cause. We are indebted to Him for everything that gives value to our existence, and we give Him, in return, with cheerfulness and gladness, our heart, our life, our all.

Ah, why did I so late Thee know,
Thee, lovelier than the sons of men?
Ah, why did I no sooner go
To Thee, the only ease in pain?
Ashamed I sigh, and inly mourn
That I so late to Thee did turn.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

1. While the tendency of infidelity is to make men miserable, it is the tendency of Christianity to make men happy. When I was living at Burnley, an infidel came to me one morning and said, "Barker, we may say what we will, but those Ranters, (meaning the Primitive Methodists) are the happiest men alive. There is one lives next to me, and he sings all the day long. He gets up singing and goes to bed singing." They *are* the happiest men alive. And real Christians of all denominations are happy.

2. Some time after my return to Christianity, I spent a few days in the house of a Primitive Methodist, a farmer, on the Cheshire Hills. I seemed in Paradise. The master and the mistress were cheerful and kind, and the daughters and girls were almost continually singing delightful Christian melodies while busy at their work. One moment they

* Since the above was written we have published a book entitled JESUS: A PORTRAIT. Look at it.

Hosted by Google

were singing of a BEAUTIFUL STREAM, and then of a HAPPY LAND. One would begin, "Jesus, Lover of my soul"—and when that was finished, another would begin with, "When I can read my title clear, to mansions in the skies,"—and the singing and the work went on together all the day. It was heaven. And a thousand such facts might be given.

3. My own experience is in harmony with these facts. My return to Christ made me happy beyond measure. It brought me enjoyments, transports, to which, for years, I had been an utter stranger. The fact is, for a long time the worth of my life was well-nigh gone. I lived, because I felt I *ought* to live, for the sake of those who were dear to me. But for myself, the light and joy of my life seemed gone for ever. My existence was a long dark struggle with crushing destiny. Though naturally hopeful, I was made to feel the bitterness of blank despair. I had moments of relief, but I had weeks of gloom and despondency. Now all is changed. I have moments of sadness and depression; but weeks and months of joy and gladness. I see the universe in an entirely different light. And instead of murmuring at Nature as cruel, I adore a gracious and merciful God. Of my errors and misdoings I must always feel ashamed, and a consciousness of them must for ever tend to make me sad at times; yet notwithstanding all drawbacks, I have enjoyed more satisfaction, more real happiness, a hundred times over, during the last twelve months, than I enjoyed during the whole period of my alienation from God. The simple-hearted Christian knows what he says, when he tells you 'There's something in religion." It has a power and a blessedness altogether different from anything else under heaven. Knowledge is sweet, and love is sweet, and power and victory are sweet; but religion—the religion of Christ—is sweeter, infinitely sweeter than all. It is the life and blessedness of the soul. It is its greatness, its strength, its glory: its joy, its paradise, its heaven.

4. If the churches abound with defects, the cause is in humanity, and not in Christianity. Men are not imperfect because they are Christians, but because they are not Christian enough. The worst men are the farthest from

Hosted by Google

Christianity, and the best are nearest to it. And the worst creeds are the least Christian, and the best are the most Christian. And Christianity is better than the best. There is not a virtue on earth, nor a truth in the universe, which does not form a part, or a consistent and fitting appendage, of the Christian system. The best, the wisest, the noblest man on earth is no better, no wiser, no nobler, than the teachings of Jesus tend to make the whole human race.

5. The influence which Jesus exerted on the world, and the influence which He is still exerting, is the mightiest and most beneficent ever experienced by mankind; and the monument which He has raised for Himself, the Christian Church, with all its institutions, its literatures, its agencies and achievements is, beyond all comparison, the grandest, the noblest, and in all respects the most magnificent and glorious that the history of the world can boast. He has indeed gained for Himself a name above every name; a glory and a power which have no equal and no resemblance; and His followers may well adore Him as the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His love and majesty.

6. And what can we do better than chime in with the anthem of His worshippers? What can we do better than teach His beneficent doctrines, and follow His glorious example? Talk as we will, the noblest and the happiest life a man can live is a life of Christian love and beneficence. And the best association on earth is that which is organized on the principle of love to Christ, pledged to the self-sacrificing labors of a wise philanthropy, the work of serving and blessing mankind.

7. A belief in Christ gives one a power to do good to mankind which no skeptic can have. It kindles love, and stimulates to activity, as nothing else does. And it inspires courage, and produces patience, and gives comfort under persecution. And it lays on us no unnecessary restraints. It leaves us free to every good word and to every good work. And it is friendly to science and to unlimited progress. It offers a bond of union for all great minds, and for all good hearts. It increases our power to reform both churches and states, without urging us to wild and revolu-

Hosted by Google

tionary measures, which might imperil the interests of both. To accept this religion, to avow this faith, involves nothing of which we need be ashamed, but everything in which we may reasonably glory. We escape alike the follies of theological dreamers, and the gloom and horrors of infidel philosophy. We live amidst the soft mild glories of eternal light; we cheer ourselves with the richest and most glorious hopes, and we spend our lives in the grandest contemplations and the noblest occupations the heart of man can conceive.

8. The vainest of all vain things, the most unseemly and revolting of all forms of pride, is the pride of disbelief in God and immortality. And the maddest if not the wickedest of all occupations, is to labor to destroy the faith and blight the hopes of others. What good, humane, or merciful motive can a man have to impel him to such a horrible undertaking?

9. How soothing the thought that your sufferings are marked by a loving God, and will be overruled for your good! And how cheering the thought, when life is in danger, or drawing to a close, that death is the gate of a higher life! And how comforting the thought, when your loved ones are leaving you, that they are going before you to a happier home, and that by-and-by you will see their faces, hear their voices, and share their presence and society again! And what a relief, when visiting the sick, the sorrowing, or the dying, to be able to speak to them of an infinite Father, of another life, and of brighter scenes, and of a happier lot, in a better land!

10. We have spent time enough among the dead. And you can see with your own eyes which are the living, loving, and laboring portions of the Church. You can see which portions build the most schools, teach the most children, reclaim the most drunkards and profligates, and do most to develop and cultivate the religious and moral sentiments of the masses. And one of the lessons we always pressed on you was, to judge a tree by its fruits. We do not intend to swerve from our plan of avoiding sectarian and theological controversy; but we may ask you to compare the amount of good religious work done by the Methodists in fifty years, with the good done by the so-called

Hosted by Google

liberal Christians, and to draw your own conclusion. The Primitive Methodists alone, with the smallest amount of means, have done incalculably more good in fifty years, than the Unitarians, with unlimited supplies of wealth, and all the advantages of learning and position, have done in a hundred and fifty years. We have cast in our lot with the living, working portion of the Church. It is our home. We had rather be a doorkeeper of the humblest living, hard-working church in the land, than dwell with the spiritually dead and cold in the palaces of princes. We will help the men that are doing the hard and needful work of humanity. If you can see such men as the Primitive Methodists and the orthodox Churches generally, working as they *do* work, and succeeding as they *do* succeed, and not respect them and love them, and take part in helping them, you have not the heart of tenderness and the spirit of Christian manliness for which we have given you credit.

11. The influence of Christianity cannot be otherwise than beneficial; nor is it possible that Christianity should become the ruling power on earth without greatly abating, if not entirely curing the evils of humanity, and making mankind as happy as their nature and capacities admit.

Imagine Christianity to be received and reduced to practice by all the people on earth, what would be the result? Disease would gradually diminish. Nine-tenths of it would quickly disappear; and life would be both happier and much longer.

Along with disease would go want, and the fear of want. All would be well fed, well clad, well housed, and well supplied with all the necessaries and comforts of life. The world is stored with abundance of natural wealth. The surface of the earth is vast enough, and its soil is rich enough, to supply homes and plenty to all its inhabitants, if they were fifty times as numerous as they are.

Three or four hours a day would be the utmost length of time that men would need to labor. The cessation of war would set the soldiers free for productive employment. The peaceful disposition of the people at home would allow the police forces to devote themselves to useful labor. The idle classes would set to work, and the waste-

Hosted by Google

ful classes would become economical. A limit would be fixed to the extravagances of fashion. Things comely and useful would satisfy the desires of both men and women. The powers of nature would be pressed more generally into our service, and compelled to do our drudgery both in the mine and on the farm. A sense of justice would dispose men to be content with their share of the blessings of Providence, and Christian generosity would prompt the rich to supply the wants of the helpless. The dangers of useful toil would be diminished. The catalogue of mournful accidents in flood and field, in mines and factories, would be abridged. Oppression would cease. The wisest and best would be our legislators and rulers. Patriots, philanthropists, and philosophers would take the place of selfish politicians. Political trickery would give place to honorable statesmanship. All cruel forms of servitude would cease. All wicked laws would be abolished. All needless burdens would be removed from the backs of the people. All would be well taught. All dreams of impossible equality, and all thoughts of violent and bloody revolutions, would pass away. Vice and crime would disappear, with all the tortures both of mind and body which they occasion. Commerce would flourish. All nations would freely and lovingly exchange their surplus products. All classes would deal with each other honorably. Each one would do to others as he would that others should do to him. No one would suffer from fraud, or from the fear of fraud. Trade would be a mutual exchange of benefits. Business would be a pleasant pastime, gainful to all, and ruinous to none.

Marriage would be universal, and would prove in every case a comfort and a blessing. The family circle would be the abode of love, and peace, and joy. Each home would be a little heaven. Children would be wisely trained and carefully nurtured in knowledge and piety. The virtues and the graces would adorn their lives from youth to age. All talent and skill, the powers of eloquence and of poetry, the influences of music and of song, and all the powers of art would serve the cause of truth and virtue, of religion and humanity.

Superstition would die. Unnatural conceptions of God,

Hosted by Google

and cruel, wasteful, and useless forms of worship, would give place to faith in a God of light and love, of wisdom and of purity, and to a spiritual, rational, and rapturous kind of devotion. All ignorant dread of natural phenomena would give place to joyous and loving admiration, and to devoutest adoration, of the great eternal Ruler of the world. If calamities came they would be accepted as divine appointments, as needful means of everlasting good. Death would lose its terrors. Belief in a blessed immortality would enable us to pass from earth in peace and joy. Bereavements would be less distressing. The departure of our friends would be but a transition to a better state of being.

The world itself would change. Its beauties would become more beautiful; its glories would become more glorious, and all its joys and pleasures would be more transporting. The eye, the ear, the taste, the smell would all become the inlets of more and richer enjoyments. Science and literature in their divinest forms would become the common lot of our race. The glory of God's character and the brightness of the eternal future, would shed unwonted radiance over the present life, and make it rapturous, glorious, and divine. The religion of Christ, while raising men to heaven, would bring down heaven to earth.

On the other hand, the want of trust in God and of a hope of immortality tends to darken earth, and to embitter life. When men are severed from God and Christ, they suffer loss both in character and enjoyment. We can speak from experience. We never ruined our health by vicious indulgence. We never became the slave of intemperance or licentiousness. We never dishonored our family, or lost the love and confidence of our wife and children. But we lost our trust in God, and our hope of immortality. And the heavens above grew dark, and the earth became a desolation. Life lost its value, and sorrow its consolation; and many and many a time we wished that we had never been born. For hours have we trod the earth with heavy heart and downcast eyes, groaning beneath a weight of sadness indescribable. Loss of faith in Christ, even with men of a naturally cheerful and hopeful spirit, renders life a burden too heavy to be borne. Hence for years before we

Hosted by Google

fully regained our own faith in Christianity, we encouraged others to cherish theirs. An infidel once said, that the Christian's hope, if false, was worth all this world's best truths; and we felt the truth of the remark, and shrank from attempts to take from men the inestimable treasure. And now we would rather die than shake or undermine the faith of any Christian soul on earth. To the work of cherishing a belief in Christ in our own heart, and nurturing it in the hearts of others, we consecrate our life, our all. We would rather live on a crust, in a mud hut, with faith in God and Christ, than feast on all the dainties of the earth, in the palace of a king, with the hopelessness and gloom of the Atheist.

We have no disposition to exaggerate; but we are constrained to say, that if all the wisdom and all the virtue on earth had dwelt in one man, and if that one man had presented a revelation of God with a view to supply the strongest, the mightiest, the most touching, the most tender, the most varied, and the most irresistible inducements to renounce all selfishness and sin, and to live a pure and godly, a holy and a useful, a divine and glorious life, that revelation could have assumed no better, no more perfect or effective form, than that which is presented in the revelation of God by Jesus Christ. We feel, while we contemplate it, that it can have no fitter or truer name than that bestowed on it by the Apostles, 'The power of God to salvation to every one that believeth.' And we are reminded of the words, 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.'

Of course the destruction of this belief can operate no otherwise than as an encouragement to evil, and a discouragement to good. The loss of Christian belief in God can be to the virtues and the graces of the heart and life, but as a blight to plants and flowers. The Christian belief makes it summer to the soul, giving birth, and power, and full development to all that is godlike and glorious in human character. The loss of that belief is winter to the soul, killing with its frosts each form of life and beauty, and making all a waste and desolation.

Hosted by Google

There have been three great disbelievers in God in our own country during the present century, all of whom have written books denouncing marriage, and counselling unbounded sensual license. If their counsels were generally taken, the result would be a state of society as horrible as that portrayed in the beginning of Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and a return to faith in God alone could save the race of man from utter extinction. But we will not dwell on this dreadful side of the subject. We know the effects of the light and warmth of the sun; and we may safely be left to infer the horror, the misery, the world-wide ruin, and the utter dreariness and desolation that would follow if the orb of day were extinguished, or for ever and utterly withdrawn. Religion is the sun of the spiritual world; it is its light and life, its joy and blessedness; and its extinction would be the death and destruction of our race.

While belief in God is favorable to virtue generally, it tends also to produce displays of superior excellence; of unusual courage, perseverance, and endurance. The believer in God may brave the most appalling dangers. His feeling is, that he who is for him is greater than all that can be against him. It is no vain boast in him to say, 'I fear God, and know no other fear.' It is natural that he should say, when threatened by mistaken or malignant men, 'You may kill me, but you cannot hurt me.' The Christian believer can afford to be a martyr. When excited by ungodly or inhuman opposition, he naturally displays the martyr's courage. He can bear too to suffer disrepute. He can trust his reputation to his omniscient and almighty Friend. He can bear to look with patience both on the adversity of the good, and the prosperity of the bad. He knows the fate,—he sees the end,—of both. The Judge of all the earth will do right. He knows no evil but sin. He knows no security but righteousness.

And Christian faith is a fountain of all conceivable *comfort*. It is a comfort to feel secure. It is a comfort to feel strong. It is a comfort to feel assured that we are beloved of God. It is a comfort to feel that we love Him in return. It is a comfort to believe that the universe has a Head, a Lord, a Ruler. It is a comfort to believe that we

Hosted by Google

Hosted by Google